

Dear esteemed colleagues,

My name is Laila, I am a clinical geneticist based in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. I received my medical degree in 2014 and finished my residency in medical genetics in 2019, at Fernandes Figueira Institute, in Rio de Janeiro. After that, I decided to expand my knowledge by enrolling for an extra year of training in cancer genetics and got accepted into one of Brazil's largest and most important cancer treatment centers in the country. All of my medical training has been done in the Brazilian public health system (SUS).

I heard about the mentorship programme from a dear friend who is currently a PhD candidate in Belgium. At first, I was hesitant to try and apply, because even though the programme was designed for early-career geneticists coming from developing countries, I wasn't confident enough. I did, however, decide to put all my effort into what seemed to be an unmissable opportunity.

Choosing the place where I wanted to go was not a difficult task. Having family members who were users of the NHS in England and hearing all about it, I have always wanted a chance to experience it and manage to compare and contrast it with my practice in the Brazilian public health system. Therefore, I picked London as my destination and Guy's Hospital the main center I wanted to see. Unfortunately I did not previously know any doctor or researcher from there but I had a dream and, fortunately, Google on my side.

I met my mentor, Dr. Adam Shaw, head of the genetics department at Guy's Hospital, through emails and Zoom meetings we set up. He was very welcoming from the start and made me feel at ease even though English is not my first language. I was wonderstruck that not only he, but the entire department, seemed eager to take me in and to share their experiences and listen to mine. That made me feel appreciated and gave me the opportunity to contribute to the programme as well. Dr. Shaw asked me to give a short lecture about my experience with Li-Fraumeni syndrome in Brazil and I was honored to have dozens of viewers. It was an incredible experience that I will never forget.

The network I managed to build during the mentorship programme was one of the best outputs I could have expected. I was invited to talk at the European Xeroderma Pigmentosum Society meeting in October 2023 by the dermatology department at St. Thomas' hospital and I can't express enough how honored I am to have been considered. I believe I made my mentor proud and we have successfully accomplished the goal of the mentorship.

Attending the ESHG conference was also a unique experience. The event itself was incredible, the organization, the speakers, the lectures. I brought back so much knowledge I have been able to put to practice in my daily work and share with my colleagues in Brazil. This was one of the goals of the programme as well and I am sure that I met it.

To sum up, I can honestly say that I will never be able to express how grateful I am to the ESHG for this opportunity. I feel like a whole new world has opened up for me. Thank you so much to the ESHG board and to the amazing team at Guy's Hospital, St. Thomas' and Evelina Children's Hospital for the warmest welcome.

I have recommended the programme to all my colleagues in Brazil and will always cherish the moments I spent in London and Glasgow in 2023. It was life-changing.

Sincerely,
Laila