



Dr. Marie-Laurence Tremblay

Written by Anupama Ghimire, Ph.D.
Trainee



Dr. Marie-Laurence Tremblay completed her undergraduate (Co-op/Hons) in Chemistry and Biochemistry & Molecular Biology Double Major at Dalhousie University. She then continued on in the Department of Biochemistry & Molecular Biology at Dalhousie University initially as a master's student and switched into the Ph.D. program. She completed her Ph.D. in 2015 under the supervision of Dr. Jan K. Rainey. Her Ph.D. work focused on understanding the self-assembly mechanism of spider silks using nuclear magnetic resonance spectroscopy. After graduation, she worked for a semester as a senior laboratory instructor at Mount Saint Vincent University before joining Dr. Kim Brewer's lab as a postdoctoral fellow at IWK hospital in the Biomedical Translational Imaging Center. There, she developed pre-clinical molecular imaging methods (magnetic resonance imaging and positron emission tomography) to track immune cells in response to immunotherapy in gynecological cancers. Moreover, Dr. Tremblay leveraged her molecular imaging skills and obtained a Mitacs Fellowship with the biopharmaceutical company IMV Inc.

Although she started her career as a researcher, she is currently the Research Ethics Board manager for Nova Scotia Health, the provincial health authority. This was a huge transition in her career as she never had experience managing a team (only supervisory/mentorship experience with students) and had to rapidly learn human ethics regulations and policies. She believes that if we put our minds to it, everything is possible. She now oversees the ethical conduct of clinical research projects in Nova Scotia's provincial health care, which includes 1300+ active studies, of which 400-500 are clinical trials. Dr. Tremblay and her team ensures that researchers follow all policies and regulations at the federal and institutional levels. She also deals with ethical complaints when they arise.



The most interesting part of her job is that she is involved in policy-making, which can directly and positively impact researchers and patients involved in those studies. She said that it is rewarding to be a part of a team which helps patients to get new treatment and care who may normally not have access to it otherwise. Whereas the challenging part of her job is to deal with the people aspect while decision-making or implementing change in her program.

Dr. Tremblay said that when graduate students come out of their Ph.D., they have so many soft skills (i.e., effective communication, presentation, project management, time management, collaboration) but we never realize they are valuable skills to obtain jobs. Besides writing a perfect resume, these qualities and attributes will help students market themselves to get a job after graduation. There are different networking opportunities held in Halifax and Dr. Tremblay recommends students to attend so students can network and get more ideas about different types of jobs available outside academia. Her advice to current graduate students is to try different things in life, do not be scared to try something new, and never hesitate to talk to people that have a job you might be interested in to learn more about it. It is always a good idea to introduce yourself to the greater research community while attending a conference and build a network. What you want to do in life can change over time and that's OKAY.