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**Watch One of DEF's Leading Researchers Discuss His Novel Vaccine to Prevent Future COVID Pandemics**

During the past 23 months, DEF-funded researcher Lbachir BenMohamed, PhD, and his colleagues have been working 24/7 to develop a radically new “universal” pan-coronavirus vaccine. For two decades, BenMohamed, director of cellular and molecular immunology and ophthalmology at the University of California, Irvine, School of Medicine, had been researching the herpes simplex virus. When COVID-19 arrived in January 2020, they decided to apply the same technology they’d been using for a herpes simplex virus vaccine to a universal vaccine against coronavirus — not only COVID-19, but all coronaviruses.



*Lbachir BenMohamed, PhD*

In a recent video for DEF, BenMohamed discusses his lab’s successes so far in developing the coronavirus vaccine (hint: They hope to move into phase 1 clinical trials toward the end of 2022), as well as additional applications for the groundbreaking vaccine and what the world may look like when it comes to future pandemics.

He also traces his lab’s success to initial and ongoing support from Discovery Eye Foundation donors. “You can have a very bright idea, you can have a very important question or hypothesis to test, but if you don't have funds to test it, then you cannot do it — and Discovery allows us to do that,” BenMohamed says. “Thanks to all the donors who contribute to our research to develop a universal pan-coronavirus vaccine. Without those donors, without those funds, we cannot do what we did over the last 23 months. And without that, we cannot get a universal vaccine. I think this is very important to move the vaccine quicker from bench to bedside and move it to a phase 1 clinical trial, so we can save humanity from the next pandemic, as well as for the current pandemic.”

[Click here to watch the full video](#)

**Meet the Researcher: Zahra Mohtashami, PhD**

When Zahra Mohtashami was growing up in Iran, her traditional family told her she would have every opportunity she wanted — as long as she didn’t leave the country. But Mohtashami wanted to be an international scientist. During her final year studying for her PhD in pharmaceuticals — during which she happened to be pregnant — she began looking for the chance to fulfill her goal.



*Zahra Mohtashami, PhD*

“I was working with ocular drug delivery systems, but in Iran, there is no opportunity to combine industry with science,” Mohtashami says. “I looked for a place where I could be more efficient and free to work with industry.”

The Gavin Herbert Eye Institute at University of California, Irvine, turned out to be that place. Mohtashami and her young daughter arrived in California about a year ago, and her husband, an IT specialist, arrived six months later.

[Meet the Researcher: Zahra Mohtashami, PhD cont'd](#)

**The 8th Annual Bench to Bedside Symposium Yields to Key Collaborations**



“The Bench to Bedside Research Symposium never would have happened without Discovery Eye Foundation (DEF),” says M. Cristina Kenney, DEF research director and organizer of the symposium.

Bench-to-Bedside’s eighth iteration took place in June 2022 as a hybrid meeting (attendance in person and remotely via Zoom). As always, it was designed to educate and promote collaboration on basic and translational approaches to clinical problems. More specifically, the symposium aimed to bring together speakers and audience members from different fields whose work and research can apply to eye diseases.

In 2015, Gavin Herbert Eye Institute (GHEI) and the DEF-funded Discovery Center for Eye Research sponsored the first Bench-to-Bedside conference to encourage researchers from UC Irvine, GHEI and throughout Southern California to meet, find similar interests and develop collaborations. As a result of all the meetings since, collaborations were initiated, and grants have been submitted and funded.

[The 8th Annual Bench to Bedside Symposium Yields to Key Collaborations cont'd](#)

**Learn With DEF on YouTube**

**Join DEF Medical Director Dr. Anthony Nesburn and Research Director Dr. Cristina Kenney to learn more about the Discovery Eye Foundation and our exciting research!**

[www.youtube.com/user/discoveryeye/videos](http://www.youtube.com/user/discoveryeye/videos)

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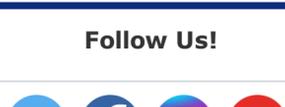


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