

Bob Barrett:

This is the podcast from '*Clinical Chemistry*,' I'm Bob Barrett. Representation and progression of women with advanced degrees in science and medicine have significantly improved over the past 50 years. A recent report from the Association of American Medical Colleges indicates that the number of female Division Chiefs, Department Chairs, and Deans has increased overall by more than 50% in the past 10 years.

Laboratory medicine would seem to be a supportive environment and a well-suited career for young women today, but has it always been that way? In the July 2012 issue of '*Clinical Chemistry*,' Dr. Shannon Haymond from the Children's Memorial Hospital, Northwestern University, Feinberg School of Medicine in Chicago posed a series of questions to a multigenerational panel of Female Clinical Chemists who related their experience as women in '*Clinical Chemistry*' and Laboratory Medicine over the past several decades.

Dr. Haymond is our guest in this podcast. Doctor has the work climate changed for women in '*Clinical Chemistry*' over the past several decades?

Dr. Shannon Haymond: Well, my co-moderator Amy Saenger and I were actually seated at a dinner table with Marilyn Huestis, who is one of our panelist and we were discussing various things, but we started to comment about the number of female role models and leaders in our field, and Amy and I were actually saying that we felt '*Clinical Chemistry*' was a good fit for women scientists, because we know a number of successful females in the field that are somehow balancing a career and a family.

So we asked Marilyn if she also felt that way throughout her career and as the conversation continued, we agreed that this was something we would investigate and like to pursue as a Q&A feature for '*Clinical Chemistry*'.

So we approached Dr. Nader Rifai about it and he was extremely supportive of the idea and offered some ideas for panelists, and we took it from there and we thought it would be important to have a multigenerational panel, because we were interested to see if there will be similarities and/or differences in the ladies experience, and we received overwhelming enthusiasm from our panelists to first participate and then we were really humbled by the candidity of their responses.

They answered openly and honestly and we really appreciated that. These women have been leaders in the field and have achieved numerous awards and recognition throughout their careers, and so we hope

that readers enjoy this feature and are inspired by their experiences and thoughts, and the thoughts that our panelists shared.

Bob Barrett: Well, let's get into some of the meat of the article. How has the work climate changed for women in '*Clinical Chemistry*' over the past several decades?

Dr. Shannon Haymond: I would say that it has improved drastically that was reflected by many of our panelist's responses, and in our background research we identified numerous reports and articles describing positive trends for women in math, science, and engineering fields.

Our particular interest was the Association of American Medical College's report that showed the number of female leaders in academic centers have actually increased by over 50% in the past 10 years, and AACC itself has had strong representation of female leaders, including most recently three consecutive female presidents.

The members of our panel were also among the first female presidents of various international professional societies, and so for women in my generation, these types of accomplishment transform the question of, if, or can I do that, to how do I get there? And so I definitely think the expectations and realities of what can be achieved have certainly been elevated for women of today's generation.

I also think an important point made by doctors, Huestis and Horwath, was that the societal norms have also changed in a way that supported to those early in their career that have families, which enables them to be more productive at both work and at home.

Bob Barrett: Doctor, you asked the panelists to describe the lessons learned and significant achievements of all the women in the field. What did you learn from their responses?

Dr. Shannon Haymond: I learned that these women learned how to be successful from both women and men, as they often had male role models and mentors who valued contributions of males and females alike.

Additionally, I found value in the comments related to conducting yourself in a professional and assertive in respectful manner and that it's very important to gain respect of your peers to performance and collaboration.

Ultimately, the women before these women pushed the limits of what others thought possible and brought about

change though hard work and talent. And so this is what's helped to raise expectations and opportunities for the next generation of female scientists.

Bob Barrett: You said the panelists were candid, and they really were describing the choices they've made throughout the careers and the realities of balancing a career in personal life. Was there a common theme to their stories?

Dr. Shannon Haymond: I think that I learned we are all alike and that we sometimes struggle with the choices made throughout our careers and personal lives, and that there is no one correct answers to balancing work and family. Each person has to find what works for their personal situation, but a key point made by one of the panelist was that consideration and awareness of your own circumstances are key to setting and achieving realistic goals and without this you can wind up frustrated and in a very negative place.

All of the panelists described a type of support system that was integral to their ability to manage their personal life and to also feel encouraged to continue their work and achieve their potential. Some had outside help, while others relied on spouses for support and a common point made was that success in your personal life reciprocates in your professional life. So achieving a work life balance is significant.

Bob Barrett: Well, finally doctor, let's look ahead what future opportunities will exist for women in '*Clinical Chemistry*'?

Dr. Shannon Haymond: There will be numerous opportunities for women in '*Clinical Chemistry*', as the panelists described, rapid advancements and technologies leading to novel biomarker discoveries and also a need for leadership in untapped areas of '*Clinical Chemistry*'.

Additionally, as the profession expands its consultative role, skills such as communicating effectively; multitasking with efficiency and organization will become increasingly important. These are often the same skills that are required for effective work life balance, and as I said before, the number of female in math, science, and engineering leadership position continues to increase. So the next generation of women scientists will undoubtedly seek such position.

Bob Barrett: Dr. Shannon Haymond is from the Children's Memorial Hospital, Northwestern University, Feinberg School of Medicine in Chicago. She has been our guest in this podcast from '*Clinical Chemistry*'.

I'm Bob Barrett. Thanks for listening!

Total Duration: 7 Minutes