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Ann M. Gronowski and Carey-Ann D. Burnham
Creation of a Professional Development Program for Women in a Major US Medical School Pathology Department
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Guest: Dr. Ann M. Gronowski is Professor of Pathology & Immunology, and Obstetrics & Gynecology at Washington University School of Medicine in St. Louis, Missouri.

Randye Kaye:

Hello, and welcome to this edition of "JALM Talk," from *The Journal of Applied Laboratory Medicine*, a publication of the American Association for Clinical Chemistry. I'm your host, Randye Kaye.

Today's podcast is about the creation of a successful professional development program for women in a major medical school pathology department. The involvement of women in science and medicine has been recorded dating back to ancient Egypt and ancient Greece. In the United States in 1849, Elizabeth Blackwell was the first woman to graduate from medical school, and she is often thought of as America's first woman doctor. Yet today, 170 years later, the percentage of full professor faculty who are women in U.S. medical schools is only 22%, and 26% within pathology departments. In addition, a recent study of differences in academic physician salaries indicates that women physicians had statistically significant lower salaries than male physicians, including pathologists. Clearly improving promotion and retention of women in academic medical schools and pathology departments is important. But what can be done to enhance the careers of, and improve the chances for success of these women?

The November 2018 issue of *the Journal of Applied Laboratory Medicine* published a special report by Drs. Ann Gronowski and Carey-Ann Burnham at the Washington University School of Medicine in St. Louis that discussed the formation of a professional development group for women in the pathology department of a major medical school. Today, we have Dr. Gronowski, who is Professor in the departments of pathology and immunology, and obstetrics and gynecology. who formed this group in 2012. Welcome Dr. Gronowski. Our first question, what made you decide to form a professional development group for women within your department?

Dr. Gronowski:

Well, when I came to Washington University to train in 1993, there were no female faculty in my division of laboratory medicine within the Department of Pathology. By

the time I joined the faculty a few years later, there was by then one other female faculty member. Since then, the number of female faculty has grown. However, in our department as in most departments of most medical schools, the percentage of women decreases with each step up the academic ladder from assistant to associate and ultimately, the full professor. After I reached the rank of full professor, I decided that I wanted to help other women climb the ladder and succeed. There's a terrific quote from Madeleine Albright, the first female U.S. Secretary of State, that there is a *"special place in hell for women who don't help other women."* And I agree with her sentiment. And so, I created a forum for women to meet in a safe and welcoming environment to develop their professional skills. The goal is to learn about gender bias and issues that affect women specifically and to help women develop skills to advance their career and increase their chances of success.

Randye Kaye: Thank you. So, these are really interesting statistics. So why do you think it is that there are so few female full professors? Is it a pipeline issue?

Dr. Gronowski: Well, that's a good question and one that many people ask. It doesn't appear to be a pipeline issue, because women represent half of the students in medical schools. And so for instance, at our institution, women have represented half the medical school class for over 15 years. In addition, according to the Association of American Medical Colleges, women represent approximately 50% of instructor and assistant professor level faculty, but only 37% of associate professor faculty, and as you already mentioned, 22% of full professors. It's clear that there is still a glass ceiling for women in science and medicine. So, the problem is multifactorial. Studies have shown that women don't receive the same salary, grant dollars, laboratory space, speaking invitations, or leadership opportunities as men. So this ultimately leads to less women at the top. A recent report from the World Economic Forum indicated that it will take 217 years, according to them, for women to achieve equality in the workplace. I sure hope that this is incorrect. It's going to take everyone working together to increase the number of women at the top of all professions, not just academic medicine.

Randye Kaye: Wow, 217 years. Wow! So, tell us, Dr. Gronowski, about the leadership development group that you formed and what is it that led you write this paper?

Dr. Gronowski: Yeah. Well, when the group formed, it was targeted only towards women faculty within our division. And over time, we included our female residents and fellow trainees and expanded to include women from both our anatomical pathology and our clinical pathology divisions. I think we've

now reached a really nice balance of attendees at all stages of their careers from both of our divisions. The forum covers various topics--articles, books and invited speakers--that span a broad range of professional development subjects. Topics are driven largely by attendee feedback during twice yearly brainstorming sessions and over the years, some topics are repeated due to popular demand, such as negotiation, difficult conversations, and unconscious bias. My co-author, Dr. Carey-Ann Burnham, has helped with our program development. After the program was in place for five years, we decided to do a survey of attendees in order to get a sense of what topics they found valuable. Well, when Dr. Burnham and I looked at the survey results, we realized that the forum and the content we've developed could easily be recapitulated at other medical schools and maybe our data could be a value to others. To our knowledge, this is the first report on the specific content that women find valuable in a professional development program.

Randye Kaye: So that's why you wrote the paper, to share that information and hopefully develop other groups. Can you tell me more about the survey and some of the interesting things that you found?

Dr. Gronowski: Yeah. The perceived value of the forum and its content was evaluated by surveying past and current attendees. So, we created a survey using SurveyMonkey.com and sent to 65 women who had been invited to the forum over the five-year period. We received responses from 26 out of 65, so 40% of the women who were surveyed. There were several things that we found particularly interesting. First, we asked, when you first learned of the group, did you think it would be a value? And we were happy to see that 96% responded yes. Well, interestingly, when we asked after attending one or more meetings, did your opinion of the value of such a forum change? And since 96% had responded they already thought it would be a value, we were surprised when 23% responded yes. But in those cases, the responders said the value actually increased after attending.

Randye Kaye: Wow!

Dr. Gronowski: So, some of the comments said that there were challenges and perspectives that were discussed in the forum that the attendee hadn't really considered before, and they learned a great deal from the discussions both personally and professionally. The other interesting thing that we found was that the topics that were rated as having the highest perceived value were those that were geared specifically towards women, compared to general professional development skills. And we hypothesized that the reason

for this was that this was a unique content and programming that was not readily accessible to the members of the group in any other forum.

Randye Kaye: Those are really interesting things to find. And now, do other institutions have similar professional development programs for women?

Dr. Gronowski: Well, I'd be remiss if I didn't give a shout-out to Dr. Paula Santrach at the Mayo Clinic. She gave me the idea for this program when she told me about a similar program that they have at Mayo. We asked our survey responders if they were now at another institution, if they had a similar program where they are now, and only three responded that they do have a program. So, yes, they do exist, but it doesn't sound like there are many. although several of our former trainees have talked about developing similar programs at their institutions. So, hopefully, the number will increase.

Randye Kaye: I hope so too. I think I know the answer to this, but just officially to wrap up, did you conclude that the forum you created is valuable for women and why?

Dr. Gronowski: Yeah, so it can be a challenge to measure the value of a program like this, but in our survey, 100% of the responders indicated that they found the content valuable to their professional development. We feel that our program gives women the skills and the confidence to succeed. We hope that our paper will inspire others to create similar programs at their institution. I can say that creating and maintaining this group is one of the most rewarding things I've done in my career, and I look forward to the day when we no longer need programs like this because we've achieved parity in academic medicine.

Randye Kaye: I look forward to that day as well. Thank you so much for joining us today, doctor.

Dr. Gronowski: My pleasure.

Randye Kaye: That was Dr. Ann Gronowski at the Washington University School of Medicine, talking about "Creation of a Professional Development Program for Women in a Major U.S. Medical School Pathology Department," from the November 2018 issue of JALM. Thanks for tuning in to JALM Talk. See you next time, and don't forget to submit something for us to talk about.