

## Women in Science: Lilli Petruzzelli

A lung cancer researcher describes her journey toward a career in science at Novartis.

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Lilli Petruzzelli, Global Head of Translational Clinical Oncology at Novartis

In recognition of Lung Cancer Awareness Month this November, we interviewed lung cancer researcher Lilli Petruzzelli, who serves as Global Head of Translational Clinical Oncology at Novartis. Here, she shares valuable career insights, including her thoughts on the benefits and challenges of working on a team.

### **When did you first know you wanted to work in science?**

Arriving at a career in science has been an evolution. In high school, I was always comfortable with science and math, but was far more excited learning about literature and history.

After visiting colleges in the US, I had the choice of attending several liberal arts schools or the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT). There was something about the approach at MIT that drew me in, and once there I fell in love with chemistry. I also studied biology and explored a number of classes that combined both subjects. My studies opened my eyes to how to solve problems using different approaches, and from that point on I knew that I wanted to pursue a career in science.

Get your ideas out there and take advantage of the strong people who surround you.

### **What is your advice for young women and girls interested in science?**

I think the most important thing is to love what you do. In my day-to-day interactions, I advise the people I work with to not worry about making mistakes. Get your ideas out there and take advantage of the strong people who surround you. Putting ideas on the table can be difficult, but seeing them flourish from the input of those around you is truly exciting.

It is easy to worry that you might not be right or that your idea is not baked enough to discuss in public. However, more times than not, you'll be on to something – and the win from additional feedback and collaboration can be energizing.

## What is your favorite part of your job at Novartis?

My favorite part is working with such highly motivated and bright people. I lead a small, fast-paced group at Novartis, and the excitement from the rapid flow of ideas and solutions never gets old.

## What is the most challenging part?

My most challenging part of my job is putting diverse groups together to make decisions. Developing molecules is a Herculean effort that requires personal dedication and creativity, but also clear decision-making.

## What is your secret talent?

In my spare time, I really enjoy making desserts and pastries. I have always had in the back of my mind that my second career would be as a pastry chef.

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*"Novartis Presents: Women in Science" is an ongoing series showcasing women at Novartis who are helping develop innovative oncology medicines for people with cancer and related diseases.*

Meet Lilli Petruzzelli, a lung cancer researcher and our latest feature in the Novartis #WomenInScience series.

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