

Women in Science: Shannon Campbell



How Shannon Campbell, Senior Vice President & Franchise Head at Novartis Oncology, came into her current role and leadership position.

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Shannon Campbell, Senior Vice President & Franchise Head of Solid Tumors at Novartis Oncology.

Shannon Campbell is a proud science geek and a mom of two, but she also oversees a portfolio of 9 medicines and a team of more than 350. On any given day as the solid tumor franchise lead, Campbell might be working with her team on a launch strategy for one product, and then later in the day on marketing planning for a mature brand-two very different challenges.

In this latest installment of “Novartis Presents: Women in Science,” hear from Campbell on her career journey, her biggest motivators and more.

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

It was in either 6th or 7th grade. We were starting to do biology experiments and I remember thinking about how cool it was to see the application for scientific theories, like osmosis. Matching theory with experimentation really piqued my interest and set me on a journey of exploration, particularly in the biologic sciences leading to health care.

Tell us more about how you landed in the pharmaceutical space.

I moved from working one-on-one with patients as a physical therapist to the pharmaceutical industry about 30 years ago (one of my patients actually recruited me). I started when there was a lot of expansion in the industry, and I found myself working for a pharma company that needed people who had strong science backgrounds coupled with good communication skills. I started in field sales and was focused on explaining the “why” behind our various medicines and which patients might benefit most from our product offerings.

That was a long time ago now, and I’ve been blessed with a career that has taken me across the globe doing really interesting work!

What brought you to Novartis?

After working for a couple of other companies, I was drawn by Novartis’ ongoing commitment to reimagining medicine. Novartis continues in its research and development efforts to explore novel mechanisms—and even novel platforms—for medicine, as evidenced by our recent acquisitions of Advanced Accelerator Applications and Endocyte.

Most importantly, when I think about innovation, it’s about following the science. Novartis is willing to explore innovative uses of our products in ways I have not seen in other companies. For example, as we’re getting ready to potentially launch a product for breast cancer treatment, in parallel we’re working to explore the potential utility of this same product in another rare disease, called PROS.

What sort of work is needed to launch a breast cancer treatment?

There’s work that needs to be done to help educate both patients and physicians on specific mutations in breast cancer that can affect prognosis as well as treatment options. So, we’re focusing our efforts on raising awareness and understanding about these mutations and the impact this knowledge can have on a patient’s breast cancer journey.

There’s also market prep work to be done; for instance, we need to be sure there’s a network of labs available with the technology needed to assess these mutations within days of the potential FDA approval in order to identify appropriate patients who may be eligible for treatment.

This is really exciting and has me working with multiple teams across Novartis to bring important therapies to market as quickly and efficiently as possible. In addition to the work I do with the sales and marketing teams, another interesting facet of my role is working with our global and development teams as we work to advance our pipeline of potential new molecules and expanded indications for our current portfolio.

Whether it’s helping colleagues solve problems or meeting patients who have been positively impacted by our products, it’s so rewarding to me.

As a leader, what qualities do you look for in team members?

There are a few things that come to mind immediately: authenticity, collaboration, resilience and valuing diversity. On each team I'm part of, I'll think about the skills we currently have among team members and work hard to identify the opportunities for new ideas and approaches in order to build an even stronger team.

What advice would you give to those looking to establish themselves in the world of health care?

Be there, be curious and use your voice. Your curiosity will lead you to continuously ask good questions and be engaged. When you are engaged in the decision-making process, I think you'll find it personally rewarding because you've contributed to something bigger than yourself.

Moving on to some personal things, what gets you out of bed in the morning?

Knowing that I'm making a difference in someone's life. Sometimes it's a small difference, sometimes it's big. Whether it's helping colleagues solve problems or meeting patients who have been positively impacted by our products, it's so rewarding to me.

We had the opportunity to meet some patients during the first breast cancer study focused on premenopausal women. This patient population is younger and often isn't the group that first comes to mind when thinking of those impacted by breast cancer. As younger women, they have very different challenges. We met a 23-year-old ballerina who helped us rethink how we engage with these women.

What do you do when you're not working?

I have a great husband and two teenage kids, and we spend a lot of family time together traveling, hanging with our rescue dogs, Bentley and Blu, and going on hikes, to name just a few favorites!



Shannon with her family

“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.

She refers to herself as a “science geek” but Shannon Campbell is also one of our fierce leaders.

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