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*In this episode, Taren Grom, editor-in-chief of PharmaVOICE magazine meets with Jennifer De Camara, VP Law, US Pharmaceutical Strategic Customer Group, Johnson & Johnson.*

**Taren:** Jennifer, welcome to the PharmaVOICE WoW podcast program and continued congratulations on your PharmaVOICE 100 in 2018.

**Jennifer:** Thank you for having me here, Taren. It's really an honor to be included among the incredible and talented women that you have been featuring. I just really love the concept of this podcast because I do believe we have a responsibility to help each other as women. And as difficult a time as I have believing that other women will find what I have to say as helpful much less inspiring, I know from my own experience that listening to other women who are willing to share plainly and transparently their truth and their experiences and how they've coped that I found those to be helpful in gathering my own thoughts and plans and having the confidence to go through them, so I really think this is fantastic what you're doing.

**Taren:** Jennifer, thanks so much and thank you for so being open to the process, and we hope that this podcast do inspire women and provide them with some tips and help along the way as they look towards fulfilling their career journeys, so thank you again.

**Jennifer:** Absolutely.

**Taren:** Speaking of career journeys, you started your career practicing healthcare law, now you could have worked in any field – why did you choose healthcare?

**Jennifer:** So my story actually really starts with why I chose the law and then it moved to why I chose healthcare within that. My maternal grandmother was a really inspiring figure to me. She unfortunately passed away when I was only 10 years old and I got to know her fairly well leading up to that time, and she was living by herself – her husband had passed away. She was a legal secretary who effectively was functioning as a paralegal – I don't recall if her title was actually as a paralegal or not. But she loved the law, she loved the work that she was doing, and she broke into that at a time when not all women were working and it wasn't necessarily well accepted. And so I just was inspired by who she was and the path that she was braving in any event.

And then there was a time when I was 7 years old and she and my mother and I went on a trip to Williamsburg, Virginia, and we were passing through the streets of Williamsburg in the shopping district. I was pointing at the things in the shop windows that I thought were neat and eventually my grandmother wheels around on me and she says, “Jennifer, you were pointing at the most expensive thing in every single shop window. You need to either be a doctor or a lawyer or marry one.” And that really struck me because I remember immediately thinking why would I marry one if I can just be one. And I really felt like it was an important callout to you really have to think about how are you going to make your dreams come true, not that my dreams were ultimately about shop windows but you have to take responsibility for how are you going to get from your dreaming to your reality, and you really need to rely on yourself to get there. And so I went through high school and was interested in sciences and particularly in what was emerging to become biotechnology and hedged my bets when I went into undergrad and double-majored in biology and political science thinking I can either go down this biotechnology pathway or I can go to law school being inspired by my grandmother and her career.

I was very fortunate because I was at undergrad in Virginia, in the mountains of Virginia, and nearby was a pharmaceutical facility for Merck and I was lucky enough to be able to intern there over the summer. It was during the period of time when Roy Vagelos was president. They were really having such a golden time, and it really spoke to me to see how science could turn into medications that could help people. And it also started for me this idea that maybe a lawyer with a scientific background could uniquely contribute.

From there, I at the same time started to have this fear that if I went down the biotechnology pathway I might end up spending the rest of my life studying a single enzyme and so I chose to go to law school. Now, in retrospect, that probably was not the most well-founded or rational decision that I’ve ever made but it worked out for me because I enjoyed law school, I enjoyed working at the law firms that I did, and learning the things that I did along the way, and I enjoyed the role of counseling other people and helping other people achieve their goals and objectives. It took me seven years of practicing as an outside counsel to eventually wind my way back around to the pharmaceutical industry so that healthcare law pathway was my road there.

It wasn’t always clear that I would actually wind up at a pharmaceutical company. There are a lot of interesting things that you can do in healthcare law but ultimately I did choose to work at a pharmaceutical company in part also because it was really bothering me not to see the end of the story. As outside counsel, you kind of get to dive into a chapter and advise on something that you don’t even necessarily see the end of the chapter, much less the end of the story. And I wanted to be able to see the whole thing and know that I was counseling on something that I would be able to continue to advise and refine on over time and see how the story turned out and see the impact of what I had done and the impact of what I was advising on. So ultimately it really wasn’t anything substantive that I learned in my undergrad biology degree which I realized by the standards of many of the people that I worked with is kind of a puny scientific degree, but what I did learn was

the importance of merging the rigor of the scientific method and knowing what good science looks like with the legal thought process and that has ultimately proven to be very helpful to me in trying to counsel my business partners.

**Taren:** I love your story. I find it to be filled with inspiration and I love the fact that you dreamt it and it came true for you – how wonderful.

**Jennifer:** Thank you. I think I got a little lucky in that but it did work out for me.

**Taren:** Luck is those for those who are prepared, right? Isn't that the saying? I think it's a great story. Thank you so much for sharing that. In your job now at a pharmaceutical company and working for one of the largest pharmaceutical companies in the world, what does your typical day look like?

**Jennifer:** For me, like a lot of people, there is always more to be done than there is time in the day. So my days are an exercise in balance, and part of what I am working on personally is continuing to let go of the idea that I can actually plan my day except at the very highest level. So I try to get my day off to the right start – I meditate; I take care of some of my small chores around the house so that I don't come home to chaos later in the day, that's part of my mental well-being; I exercise; and I also start working on some of the hard projects that really are going to need some time and focus before everybody else has gotten active in the day. So I get up early so that I can get all of those things done because I know that by the time I get in the office I'm going to be in a lot of meetings on a wide variety of topics and I'm really not going to have that focus time again until I come home in the evening. And in the evening, of course, some of that time is of split importantly with spending time with my daughter.

So during the day I sit on the management board of our strategic customer group, I advise our senior management on legal matters that support all levels of engagement with payers and institutional customers and patient access and support programs and all of that against the rapidly evolving healthcare environment in which we operate. I'm really fortunate to work with a lot of great people. The people that I work with are smart. Their hearts are in the right places. We're all trying to help patients, so that part of my day is always very enjoyable getting to interact with them and figure out how do we take the things that we're doing and better help and support patients.

And in terms of how I go about counseling the business in this environment, I try to serve in the role of a trusted advisor. I try to make sure that I understand their goals and issues. I try to proactively counsel, and within that I don't draw the line at legal advice per se. I've never really been able to stop there that's why for me it was so important to be able to finish the chapter and finish the story because I try to think through the alignment of my legal advice to the business strategy to the feasibility of how is that actually going to work and the execution issues that we're going to encounter along the way that we need to think through for that legal advice to really be able to become reality. And really it's

usually never a case where I advise X and the business does you know X plus Y and that's it. It's almost always I advise X, the business does X plus Y, things happen, things change, we learn something new, and then I need to go back and refine that advice and we keep that cycle and that story going.

So I guess to get back around to the original question, my days are really interesting and I never feel like I haven't spent my time well during the day. I just also realize that I can never exactly predict what I'm going to be doing but that's probably a good thing if I am committed to the idea that I'm going to keep focusing on what's really the most important thing at that moment in time.

**Taren:** I think that's wonderful and I love the fact that you have given up the fact that structure is just not going to be a part of what it is that you're doing because your day could go sideways at any point, so having that ability to be agile and flexible really stand you in good stead.

**Jennifer:** Yes. It's become a necessity to let go of that thought, although I will say I have to practice at that every day because I'm a planner by nature.

**Taren:** Yes, I can see that in your DNA – yes, I understand that. What are the stakeholder groups you mentioned are part of the folks who you counsel involve patients? And I know that you're a self-admitted patient advocate, and while it seems like a layup but why is this particular area of focus important to you? Why do patients matter?

**Jennifer:** Thank you for asking that because like a lot of people in our industry I see the amazing good that we can do, and I see the challenges that our patients face in navigating through the healthcare system. A couple of presenters ago on this podcast, the point was made that the healthcare system fails people. I don't think they went on to say regularly but I will say that I think that is just part of it for a lot of different reasons and it's not because people aren't trying hard but you combine the way that the healthcare system has been constructed over time and the areas where we lack the scientific knowledge to inform our diagnosis and treatment process, it just all points to the fact that patients have a lot of difficulty that they have to navigate through and whatever we can do to make it easier is really important.

And also like a lot of people I've been through it on both sides. I've been through a difficult personal experience with the healthcare system when I was bitten by my cat that turned into a case of community-acquired C. diff that it turned out to be vancomycin resistant, and so that was a whole odyssey that I never thought I was going to be going through and experience the spots in the healthcare system where you start to get to the doctors that are kind of like 'well if this one doesn't know how to help you, we may not know how to help.'

I went through it with my daughter when she was a much younger child. She had some behavioral issues that we couldn't figure out what they were and we ended up engaging a healthcare professional after healthcare professional and ultimately I ended up building a treatment team for her. We had a psychiatrist, a psychologist, a neurologist, a primary care physician, and an occupational therapist and we still didn't really exactly know what we were dealing with and a lot of options were put out on the table and the communication was incredibly poor. I ultimately basically became the communication facilitator getting information that I would fax weekly to all of these healthcare professionals to hold them accountable to tell me what I needed to be doing and thinking about with my daughter. And also the lack of knowledge sometimes that people are to varying degrees transparent or not transparent about. Some suggestions were put on the table for her treatments that ultimately had we gone down those pathways would have not been good for her in the long run.

So for us the story turned out well; it turned out that she has a sensory processing disorder which was very manageable ultimately. She got some occupational therapy, she learned some new skills, and has been able to manage it very successfully over time. She's 16 years old. I'm going to be taking her this weekend to get her learner's permit. She's doing fabulously in school. So our story turned out very well, but it was a really frightening and sobering experience for me because I didn't know how it was going to turn out. I needed every skill that I had as a lawyer, as someone working in the pharmaceutical industry, and as someone who at the time happened to be supporting our neuroscience division at my company; and if I hadn't had all three pieces of those knowledge and skill sets that I was putting into play, I really don't know that our ending would have been as good as it was. So I'm extremely sensitive to the fact that everything we do affects patients and we have to think through it through that lens of the unintended consequences and the innovative ways that we can try to help them. So that's really what led for me to an enhancement of a sense of responsibility that I already had but now it's really a very passionate and acute sense of we really need to think about how can we best help the patients.

**Taren:** First, thank you so much for sharing such a personal story with us. But, secondly, just imagine as you said if you didn't have all those skills, it does make you think about the average healthcare consumer who is out there who doesn't have the insights or the inside track. How do they manage? And there are tons of stories out there and I agree; I think the healthcare system can do much better for everyone.

**Jennifer:** Yes, absolutely. We have a long way to go and it's at least heartening and inspiring to me to see the stories that are featured in PharmaVOICE and elsewhere of everything that we're trying to do because it is so needed.

**Taren:** Yeah. And that's not to say because there are dedicated individuals such as yourself out there who are really putting their shoulder against the wheel to move the system forward and to really improve all the processes for patients, so kudos to you.

**Jennifer:** Thank you.

**Taren:** Let's move a little bit to social media. It's become ubiquitous in our life but you are at the forefront of helping J&J understand the role that social media now plays in our world. What advice or guidance did you provide to your internal customers? Because I think there are still some companies out there that are still struggling with how social media should play within their organizations.

**Jennifer:** Thank you. I was just speaking about my daughter a moment ago and I have to say this is actually one of the great ironies of my career because while she was still in pre-school I panicked because I didn't really know the first thing about social media. And so when it became clear that there was a need for internal expertise to be developed in this area from a legal perspective, I signed right up because I'm thinking 'hey, two birds with one stone. I can work on this innovative area and I can help my company succeed in uncharted waters, and I'll be ready for when she's a teenager on Facebook.' Well, as I mentioned, she's 16 now and she does not use social media at all. I have since handed off social media to a colleague.

But importantly, while I was advising on it, I did come up with a few basic principles that I followed in advising my business partners on social media that I've been able to parlay into other areas where we're trying to innovate so it was just a fantastic experience for me. And these principles are fairly simple and at some level you would think that they're just intuitive but sticking to them with some discipline I really do think helped. So first was knowing the technology because in like many areas if you don't really understand how the technology works you really can't do anything effectively and know that it's going to turn out the way that you think that it's going to turn out. Part of knowing the technology and being prepared in this way also means you need to educate your review team. Most companies when they're engaging in social media have a copy review team that is responsible for approving the messaging that's going to go out in the social media, but if they don't understand how that underlying platform is going to operate you can really have some unintended consequences. So first is you have to know the technology and educate everyone involved about it and make sure that they get it.

Second is to find the landmarks about how you can proceed in the absence of guidance. In the absence of guidance, I really believe in most circumstances it should not be looked at as an instruction to wait but rather an opportunity to help shape and create and to figure out well, okay, if there's no guidance on how to engage in this particular activity where are the proxies, where can I come up with something that is an analogy to what I'm trying to do; and taking from those analogies and what we know has been said by the relevant regulatory agency in question, how can I at least glean the spirit of what they would probably want to see happen and the principles that they might draw from in ultimately creating the guidance and take that to shape how we're going to construct our own guardrails in doing this activity. And then that in turn needs to get parlayed into

something that you document – document how you’re going to manage the activity and stay abreast of the technology because if you don’t write it down, what I have found is it makes you vulnerable to inadvertent drift over time of how the activity is being conducted or people turn over and the next person doesn’t come in and execute it exactly like you’d had in those detailed discussions with the first person. So really getting things written down I think is a critical, sometimes painful, step but a critical step in getting the team aligned around what is actually going to happen.

And then it’s important to see how it worked and not just for the business owner to see how it worked but for the loop to be closed with the entire review team because then you can say well, okay, we constructed it this way; how did it actually turn out? What are the things that didn’t turn out the way that we thought and are we okay with that or not? And what are the things that we have a high degree of control around that maybe now we’ve got more confidence in our people or our processes and maybe we can loosen the reins a little bit on that piece of it, again document where you turn out and then kind of rinse and repeat and that’s how you kind of build a closed loop learning system that I think delivers a high quality result over time. And what I found, as I mentioned earlier, is that that basic formula is something that I feel transcends platforms and campaigns and even just being dedicated to social media. It’s something that I’ve been able to parlay into work on other different projects and innovative areas like how we go about constructing patient support programs as an example.

**Taren:** That’s excellent. Thank you so much. I think that it’s been a fascinating journey when we look at social media as you said, and I think that is quite the irony that your child is now not engaged at all in social media when you really dedicated so much time to figuring it all out. Isn’t that just the way with kids, right?

**Jennifer:** It is, absolutely. Guaranteed 180-degree principle – whatever you think is going to happen, no. Which has been further reinforcement to my belief that I should just stop planning and get used to the idea that I just need to prioritize, not plan.

**Taren:** That’s very funny. You work for a company that is regularly recognized as one of the most connected healthcare companies amongst other lists where they’re at the top, but what do you attribute that success to? What makes J&J unique?

**Jennifer:** Well I think it’s pretty simple and I don’t know that it’s down to a secret sauce per se, but we just have a very strong cultural commitment to ensuring that our patients and their healthcare professionals are getting the information they need about our products. We are the experts in what we make and so we need to be where they are because we are often in the best position to communicate the information that they need about what our products are and what they do and how to think about them. And so the entire team from the people that are writing the content to the people that are reviewing as I was just describing, we all recognize how critically important that is and we work to

make sure that it happens in the right way. So I think it's a fairly simple commitment to our responsibility of communication.

**Taren:** Excellent. You're passionate about the law, you're passionate about science, you're passionate about patients, and you're equally passionate about advocating for women and diversity in the workplace. Talk to us about why this is important especially today.

**Jennifer:** Yeah, absolutely. So without pulling out a lot of statistics, we know that women are not proportionately represented in leadership roles and so while we've come so far there is still so much more that needs to be done. And it makes good sense that it's good for business if you believe that you get your best work product from a diversity of thoughts and a background of experiences.

One of the things that's been striking to me in working in my own company is employee group that supports women and their inclusion in leadership are the commonalities of what we think and experience –the struggles of not being confident in how to balance career and home. The fear is that advancing will further throw that balance off and maybe I need to wait until the kids are older or the sense that we have to be experts at a role before taking it instead of having the permission, giving ourselves the permission to learn as we advance. There, I think, are so many barriers that we disproportionately carry and yet when we talk about them we learn 'oh, she had that same fear and she advanced anyway and she got through that and it worked out so maybe it's not an impossible balance.' I just think it's critical that we take down these artificial barriers in our minds because even after we do that we still have to get out there and compete.

So I think it's also important because beyond diversity, being good for our companies and good for the patients that receive our products, I'm also mindful that I came into the story benefiting from the chapters that were written by the generations before me – the women who fought for the right to vote and earn their way into the workforce and made it normal not just possible but normal for me to go to law school and have the jobs that I've had. And I do feel this responsibility that we're writing our chapter in the story right now and I hope that the story ultimately concludes in a world that stops judging and penalizing on things like gender or color or orientation that don't really matter to how well you can do the job or how good a person you are. So I feel very responsible to deliver to my daughter and her friends as much as I can contribute to that story ending as possible.

**Taren:** I think that's a wonderful sentiment and I often think is it that the women need to change or do we also need to start to think about how organizations need to change in terms of how they view their employees?

**Jennifer:** That is a really great question and great point. I will say absolutely – depends on the person. I doubt that all women necessarily have some of the internal barriers that I

have and hopefully over time those are becoming fewer and fewer that even start with some of those thought processes. But all of that said, when I say we have to get out there and compete, that's part of what I'm starting to allude to and I completely agree. We have work to do in our organizations to continue to level the playing field and make sure that those opportunities are being provided. So I absolutely agree – it's both sides of the equation that need to be worked on but I also emphasize the thought process piece of it because I just think it's so critically important that we not put our own barriers in our way but that we take those out because we still have the work to do of getting our organization to continue to provide that completely level playing field and help other people get to where they need to get to.

**Taren:** Couldn't agree with you more. And even in terms of maybe organizational reconstruct and thinking about what is work-life balance, what does that mean for all employees not just women, right? So I think women feel additional pressure that they need to have that work balance – they need to perform at the office, they need to be home for the kids, they need to do 9,000 other things, and we don't see that same kind of anxiety in terms of men. But there are plenty of men who want to work and want to go home to see their kid's soccer game, but how do we change that perception? And maybe if we start to chisel away at that, we can see things start to change a bit more.

**Jennifer:** Yeah, I think that's a fantastic point because that equation plays out differently but you want everyone to feel empowered to make the choices that they want to make in terms of that work-life balance. I think that's a fantastic point.

**Taren:** Let's move along to leadership. How do you lead your teams? How do you inspire them? How do you motivate them? How do you keep everybody uplifted?

**Jennifer:** I try to inspire by getting in there and by encouraging people. People really need to know that they're cared about and their goals matter and that you'll tell them what's going well and what might need some attention. Some people are absolutely fantastic at that, at making other people feel good about themselves and the work that they're doing, and that can be an incredible motivator. So I do try to focus on talking about the progress that we've made and how the individual contributor's qualities and their actions have made a difference because I don't think that the power of praise can be underestimated.

I also think some of the things to think about is it's critically important that there be a clear vision and that it's explained and often multiple times explained why that's important because people need to believe that a goal is important and that accomplishing it is going to help something important and will be recognized. Sometimes we need to talk about the obstacles and how to get through them and where it'll help to move the effort forward when we're hitting obstacles I'll get in there and do the work too alongside my partners. I think whatever it takes to keep the hope alive that we're going to reach the goal is what I try to do, and sometimes it just takes stepping back and studying the

dynamic of what's happening and trying to figure out why is something not moving and then how do you figure out the steps to take in order to make sure that people do stay on track and inspired and motivated. Now all that said, as I've alluded to earlier, I am incredibly blessed to work with teams that are bright and talented and they work hard very naturally so it's really usually just a matter of making sure that all that positive energy is channeled and people have the opportunity to shine in the way that they are capable of doing.

**Taren:** Wonderful. How do you measure success for yourself and your teams? You'd think it would be an easy question, but it's hard.

**Jennifer:** It is. It is. I tend to think about it somewhat simply in that I try to think about success. I do think about success as whether I left things tangibly better at the end of the day than they were at the beginning and did I do it the right way. It's a very simple equation but I'm a fixer by nature, and so I just look at did I leave things better than I found them and did I go about it in the way that makes people maximize what they can do, building them up, motivating them, and treating other people ultimately with respect and dignity and also never compromising my own integrity. So I look at those kind of attributes – did it get better and did I go about doing it in a way that I can be proud of. And as long as I can say yes to both of those things, I call that a good day. And of course then ultimately as we've been talking about throughout the discussion the real rewarding success is seeing how that has a positive impact on other people and particularly on patients.

**Taren:** That's wonderful. I know you're a mentor and I'd love to hear why this is important to you and why do you believe in general that mentoring is important.

**Jennifer:** It's very important for me to help other people achieve what they are capable of and work through the times when they just don't know exactly what to do or how to get there. I've been there, I think a lot of people have been there, and now it is such a difficult job environment. I mean I felt like I came out of law school into a challenging job environment and I feel like it's just gotten exponentially harder. So I do also feel a real responsibility to pay it forward, so to speak, and try to help other people.

For me, what that translates to is mentoring is just taking the time to listen to someone carefully and try to help them through a lot of different ways – one is sharing my own experiences, maybe that will be helpful to them. Sometimes it's just trying to problem solve what specifically is challenging them. Maybe they need to learn something, maybe they need to meet somebody new to be able to add to their network or interview or learn more. Sometimes it's just being able to look at a problem from a different angle and figuring out what are those next steps that they can take that will help them keep charting their course. And I do find it incredibly rewarding because quite often I can see during the discussion that it goes from being kind of trepidation or consternation or frustration to their wheels are turning and the ideas are starting to come and the hope and excitement is

firing about what they can leave the conversation and do and be able to achieve their goals. So that's always exciting.

I will also say though, I know in many different discussions there's been a distinction between mentoring and sponsoring and I think the other piece of that is looking for those opportunities when you can also be somebody's sponsor. I think that is also a responsibility that we have to try to find those opportunities when you can perhaps even be behind the scenes. Often you don't necessarily know who your sponsors are, but looking at those times when you can really tangibly make that connection help someone in their career, put in that good word when they're applying for something, I think that's also an important thing to keep an eye out for because both of them make important differences in people's lives.

**Taren:** I couldn't agree with you more. And that sponsorship piece is really a weighty responsibility because that means you're willing to put your skin in the game for somebody else.

**Jennifer:** Absolutely. Not done lightly but I think it's critical to be willing to do because that is part of how good people get their opportunities.

**Taren:** Agreed. Finally, if you were able to go back and perhaps say talk to that girl that was looking in that shop window, what piece of advice would you give to your younger self?

**Jennifer:** This is always a hard question. Trust your instincts and don't let uncomfortable questions go unanswered. Both are difficult to do when you're younger I think for some people and for me sometimes that was the case. And when I look back at the lessons that I've learned the hard way, most of them were learned because I didn't do one of those two things and so it's really making sure that you have the confidence that if it doesn't feel right, figure out how to get it out on the table, trust your gut, and be willing to press people on those questions that aren't really getting answered to your satisfaction or find another way to get the answer that you need but don't leave assuming that you can be safe in your assumption. So I know it's a bit of an abstract answer but it's kind of one of those broad truths for me that I've learned the hard way and would definitely give that advice to my younger self.

**Taren:** Jennifer, thank you so much for being so open and sharing your story, and I look forward to hearing more about you as your future chapters unfold. So thank you so much.

**Jennifer:** Thank you, Taren. This has really been wonderful. I really appreciate you having me on here.



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