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In this episode, Taren Grom, Editor-In-Chief of PharmaVOICE magazine meets with Liz Lewis, Chief Counsel; Specialty Bus/R&D; and Head of Patient Advocacy, Oncology at Takeda Pharmaceuticals.

Taren: Liz, welcome to the PharmaVOICE WoW Podcast program.

Liz: Thank you so much for having me. I'm delighted to be speaking with you today.

Taren: It's so great to reconnect with you after your 2018 PharmaVOICE 100 honor. I'd like to get to know you a little bit better and talk about your unique position. You have a really cool title. It's the intersection of Chief Counsel and Head of Patient Advocacy. Can you describe how you balance the two and how this came to be?

Liz: It's a really great question. People ask me all the time how I can do both and particularly how can someone who runs a legal function also does patient advocacy and for me this just reiterates advice I often give women, which is to grasp the opportunities and be more concerned about the journey rather than the end game of the journey. And I don't think I ever would have had this opportunity if I hadn't really kind of allowed myself to progress on the journey of it. So when I came in to Takeda many years ago one of the things that I did was help build the company the infrastructure from a legal and a compliance perspective for the launch of its first commercial product.

As part of that role I worked with this emerging group, this advocacy group that had been in existence before I walked in the door and really got to learn the organization inside out so years later when the head of the organization transitioned away from the company to a new role I had had the opportunity to take this role on at having worked with them for so many years having worked hand in hand to design their program, to design the function, really had a very good sense of what that function was, what it meant to the company and even more importantly a really strong vision of where I thought it needed to go into the future.

In terms of balancing the two which I think was the second part of the question that you asked, it isn't really that difficult to balance the two in that from an advocacy perspective Takeda were so focused on kind of putting the patient at the center of everything we do

then focusing on our trust with society, our impact on reputation and then kind of having the business follow that when you look at those elements it's very consistent with kind of a legal framework and how lawyers think, so it's been easy for me from that respect to balance the two.

Taren: Let's talk about your role as the head of patient advocacy since you just brought that up. You were there at the beginning and I think it's – I'm so fascinated you there for the launch of the first commercial product and I'd love to talk about that a little bit more as well, but how did you really form or transform the patient advocacy organization?

Liz: When I took the advocacy organization over it was in like 2013, 2014, the organization was very similar to the way it had been when I walked in the door in 2002. In 2005, 2006, we had made some changes, but fundamentally this organization was relatively similar in the way it had been in the early days, but yet patients have changed so much in the year since 2002 in terms of their activism and what they demand. The external environment has changed dramatically particularly from an industry perspective as we think about how we better imbed patients in the development process.

And the company had changed significantly where we had gone from kind of a one-product company to then having been acquired by Takeda and growing and taking on additional products. And so when I took on the function what I had really focused was how do you modernize this function, which has been such a strong part of who we are in oncology at Takeda and continue to leverage that strength, but also help the organization continue to be really relevant to the company today.

Taren: Right. You just said there's so many factors that are influencing internal and external when we look at what's happening with social media and patient advocacy. These all have to play key roles in what you're looking at in terms of how you're continuing to be focused the organization I would think.

Liz: It really does, but for me yes social media is important but when I think about how are we focusing the advocacy function and the importance of the advocacy function, it's not so much about social media but it really is, but how do we really appropriately imbed patients in the development process because at the end of the day if we want to develop medicines and get medicines approved that really meet the needs of patients, we have to truly understand what those needs are from the patients and a big focus of what I have done with this group since taking it over has been focusing on kind of ensuring that we are close to the patient and that we really kind of understand what the patient perspective is from kind of early on in development through commercialization and marketing of these medicines.

Taren: Can you provide a couple of examples of how you really are imbedding the patient within the organization? Did it start in clinical trials? Does it start in the commercialization or is it all the way through the lifecycle?

Liz: It really is all the way through the lifecycle and as I think of examples – I can think of examples that kind of carry us through the lifecycle. So from an early development perspective we have this example where we have a compound in phase 2 development and we work with an advocacy organization to do a prognostic patient journey mapping process, what we really wanted to understand is for a patient reported outcomes and as we're looking at outcomes kind of what are the outcomes that matter most to patients, kind of not the outcomes that you can kind of pull down and kind of understand and read about, but if you go in and interview those patients, what are the ones that they really feel are important and we were able to imbed those outcomes in our trial design so that we will be able to get a quantifiable data from those outcomes and really be able to measure it for patients.

For one of our products that is approved and we have continuing studies through a registry, we actually have two steering committee members of that trial who are patients. One is a US based patient and one is an ex-US based patient and I mean these aren't just any patients particularly the one from the US he was a former – a retired physician. He had been involved in clinical trials in his career, but they sit on a steering committee with the investigators and really help us kind of design the trial, help with the direction of the trial and provide that patient input and then from a commercialization standpoint and probably it goes into commercialization and then back down into earlier R&D, we have a PLC or a Patient Leadership Council and so we think about patients the same way we think about physicians in that there are certain key opinion leaders or we call them POLs, Patient Opinion Leaders and we have a counsel of these Patient Opinion Leaders that advise us in our direction and so we have a history of having some really frank conversations back and forth.

I mean I could tell you we don't always like what we hear. They might not always like what they hear, but we come to the table and talk about it and kind of really understand the perspective and sometimes we're able to very easily integrate it into what we're doing. Sometimes it's a little bit more challenging, but we have the conversation with the patients. We go back with them, so they understand what our perspective is and in this way think we can really get a good perspective from the patients.

Taren: Fantastic. Thank you so much for sharing. I think these are great examples of how companies can really think about the patient and patient-centricity, so thank you again. You've done some interesting things in support of patients. You raised some

funds around multiple myeloma for, while climbing Mt. Fuji. Tell us what that experience was like.

Liz: Climbing Mt. Fuji was an incredible experience. I was there in my capacity as a Takeda employee and this was a climb to raise money as you said for multiple myeloma. It happened in Japan and of course Takeda is a Japanese company, so it really allowed us and me as a participant to kind of merge those kind of strong Japanese roots with the work that we do here with the Multiple Myeloma Research Foundation. We talk about patient-centricity and being close with patients, but going on a climb like Mt. Fuji where there were patients on the climb kind of being in really close quarters with them, supporting them through the climb and in the cause, it makes the day-to-day work so much more meaningful and real.

Taren: Fantastic and congratulations. The experience was just so fabulous. I mean not everybody gets to climb to the top of Mt. Fuji.

Liz: It was a fabulous experience. It is a long climb and of course you get up in the middle of night so that you can see sunrise at the top of Mt. Fuji, but for me the perseverance and the grit from these patients that were on the climb was really astounding because it's not an easy climb and it was really inspiring to be with the patients who were doing it also.

Taren: Wonderful. As we've discussed, you are responsible for a big remit at Takeda. When you think about the longer term, what is your vision for your specific organization within the company?

Liz: It's a great question. As you know, Takeda right now is in the midst of some change after an acquisition, and so when I think about kind of where we are with the new Takeda my agreement both on the legal side and the advocacy side is continue to develop a really strong organization that evolves and innovates with the business and provides employees with the opportunity for robust development and kind of a place where they feel like they can really make a difference.

Taren: Fantastic, Liz. You know one of the things about this podcast series is really talking about what are some of the wow moments in the careers of the women I'm speaking to. Can you share what a wow moment has been for you in your career?

Liz: I tend not to think in wow moments, but I tend to think in moments that kind of really changed the trajectory of my career and I have kind of there are a couple of pivot points in my career that have really kind of changed the trajectory and those pivot points have always been not the things that I was necessarily looking for or striving for, but

those kind of just like almost oddball things that came my way. In a couple of instances, there were things that nobody else wanted because they were considered too hard or too difficult or kind of not necessarily something that would garner a lot of success or recognition and those were the things that kind of were career-defining moments for me because I was able to kind of take them on and knock them out of the park and really shape my career in a different way.

We talked a little bit about my kind of coming in and taking on advocacy and really kind of helping to build that from day one. Day one when I walked in, it was something – it was a really hard group to work with because it was a group that nobody really had a strong vision from a legal perspective and kind of what it should look like. Advocacy if you think back many years ago was something that was emerging and kind of not as present as kind of patient-centricity is today and so kind of doing something for scratch that was very nebulous was not necessarily high on a lot of lawyers’ lists, but yet it gave me the opportunity to really learn the function and take it over.

But I would say even my involvement from my early days when I was in a law firm and working so closely with the pharmaceutical industry, I mean that happened because when I started as a lateral at a Washington, D.C. based firm that I was at, I kind of got the assignment when I walked in the door that none of the other associates wanted, but yet it launched me on this kind of amazing path in terms of working within the pharmaceutical industry. So it goes back again to sometimes the biggest moments are not necessarily initially those wow moments.

Taren: Got you. Let’s talk about your pivot from being in private practice in Washington, D.C. to join the pharmaceutical industry. What drew you into life sciences?

Liz: I had always been a healthcare lawyer from the day I started working after law school and I started off more as a Medicare and Medicaid reimbursement attorney. I grew up in a medical household. I was the daughter of a physician. I grew up as a kid going to the hospital with my father all the time going on rounds, going in with him when he saw patients on the weekend and then as I got older when I was in high school I worked in his office. By the time I got to law school and I was interviewing at firms I knew the difference between Medicare and Medicaid.

I actually in those days it was HCFA, the Health Care Financing Administration. I knew working with HCFA reimbursement picks up 1500 form was like because I had done some of that and I always knew that it was something that I wanted to keep close as I started practicing law and so for me being a healthcare attorney and being able to kind of meld kind of my experiences growing up with where I was going professionally was

exactly what I was looking for and then with respect to the pharma industry, it just kind of happened as I started working with more and more clients.

And I had a couple in particular that I worked very closely with that were here in the Boston area and that was actually why I came to Takeda then Millennium in the early days is because they both had recruited me to come in and work with the company. I came in initially as outside counsel and then very quickly transitioned to in-house counsel.

Taren: Fantastic. So it's been a really nice as you said trajectory for you. You know when I speak with women in the industry I always want to know how would you describe your leadership style because the answer varies so I'd love to hear from you. How do you shape your leadership?

Liz: It's so funny because last week I was just at a leadership team meeting with one of the business units I support and we did one of these exercises where you learn your – you understand your leadership style and it shows you in colors kind of where you are from a color perspective and it shows your kind of conscious and your unconscious leadership style and so with that perspective it's always kind of interesting to see how I might answer and then kind of think about what that said about me. But my leadership style is I have always been kind of a very high energy leader. I value open communication. I value kind of really moving things along and being kind of very kind of – I don't want to say goal-driven, but really kind of driven to kind of make a difference and get things done. I have never really been described as a very kind of quiet and as a very quiet leader, one that operates very slowly and methodically.

Taren: So, would we describe you as a red then? Is that a fair assessment in the color wheel?

Liz: Oh, very good because – you got it. I am very red with a lot of blue.

Taren: I can see that. Now, I am a yellow so there we go. That's funny. If you had to describe yourself, in what word – you just said you're not plotting, you are action-oriented. What would be the one word that describes you best?

Liz: Oh, that's so hard. I think I'd go back to one of the words I just used before as I tend to be kind of a very high energy person and a very high energy leader. If you're looking for other words, hard to come up with one, just one word, but I think another one of my hallmark has always been that I'm enterprise and strategic thinker that I'm constantly looking across the enterprise rather than kind of looking at just one particular function.

Taren: That's awesome. And I think that that's a very applicable right now in today's life sciences industry because we've noticed that silos do not work, so you have to have an enterprise vision almost to move the needle.

Liz: You do have to have an enterprise vision and so for me, it has always come naturally. Oftentimes will just be able to line up the dots in lots of different places. For years, I thought it was because I sat in a legal function and I got the opportunity to work with so many different groups, but I don't think that that's it. I think that it rarely requires a level of curiosity and requires you to kind of step back from what you're doing on a day-to-day basis to allow yourself to have kind of that broader perspective.

Taren: Yeah. Not everybody can do it, so I don't think it's a skill as well so good for you.

Liz: Yeah. I think if you do it, it seems easy, but then when you realize that it's not everybody can do it – it is a skill. I think it also requires a certain amount of empathy and awareness because as you're thinking from an enterprise perspective you also constantly have to put yourself in the shoes of others.

Taren: Agreed.

Liz: And understand that perspective and that also can be hard to do.

Taren: Agreed. And you have to make yourself vulnerable sometimes as well and that's not always easy for leaders to do.

Liz: Mm-hmm. Exactly.

Taren: Right. So, how would you define success for yourself?

Liz: Even though I'm very red and very action-oriented, people are really, really important for me and so for me when I think about success and I think about kind of the legacy that I ultimately leave, it is all about the people and those that I've developed, mentored and trained over the years and really less about myself because I feel like it's because those people are really the ones who'll make a huge difference and a kind of are that legacy to the organization and the industry.

Taren: I think you're very humble because I know that I have spoken to people who know you and are very inspired by you, so you have that.

Liz: Oh, thank you.

Taren: You're welcome. What has been one of the biggest challenges you've had to overcome and how did you do it?

Liz: One of the biggest challenges that I've had to overcome is actually just thinking about where I am today. When I came in to the organization and if you've noticed through this discussion, never quite said how long I've been here, but I came into the organization in 2002. I never thought that I would be here so many years later and the organization has changed in so many ways over the years and I've changed too.

So a challenge for me has always been kind of how do I continue to be relevant. How do I continue to shape a role that's really meaningful for me and it is the reason I've been here for as many years as I have had because I have pushed myself to continually evolve with the company and to really grab new opportunities and so many times people think of new opportunities as a promotion and I'm not talking about kind of pushing for promotion. I'm talking about pushing for new opportunities that really shape your career and really round out who you are and so it's been a challenge to continuously push myself, but because of it I've had these phenomenal opportunities along the way that I don't think I would have gotten otherwise and have allowed me to be where I am today.

So, I have such an incredible role not only do I have this amazing legal role as chief counsel for all the specialty BU's in R&D which is a global legal role and then my head of patient advocacy which is just something I'm so passionate about and most lawyers don't get to do. I'm also the Takeda board member for bio and mass bio, which gives me a policy role to my job, which I absolutely love. So it's my biggest pride, but also my biggest challenge which was kind of pushing myself to constantly be able to have these different opportunities and continue to evolve.

Taren: I think it's great. You really have developed a very enriched career. Let's talk about your role on bio. What role are you playing and how are you shaping some of those policies and guidelines?

Liz: So, I'm a board member for bio. I think the more interesting question is I'm one of the few non-CEOs on the bio board. I had the opportunity because the head of our business unit was conflicted in the role, just conflicted with too many different meetings and so always an interesting experience when you step up onto a board and you're one of the few non-CEO, so for me on the board the – can we start over again here?

Taren: Okay.

Liz: Because I'm rambling.

Taren: No, no, no, no. So, I was going to say – so let's talk about your board role at bio and how are you shaping and guiding the association and how did you get to the board at bio?

Liz: So, I got to the board of bio. I'm one of the few non-CEOs who sits on the bio board and of course also one of the few women who sits on the bio board. I had this opportunity because the head of our business unit was unable to take on the role, conflicted with a lot of meetings and so I was able to step up. My role on the board is to really represent all of Takeda in the US on those issues that matter most for the company. It gives me an incredible opportunity within Takeda. We talked a moment ago about enterprise thinking and really being able to flex that enterprise thinking, really thinking about kind of what bio's agenda is and how Takeda plugs into that and what's important for us.

Taren: Great.

Liz: Within the matters on bio, I have started my career as a reimbursement attorney and everything old is new again and now with the current focus and healthcare on access, that's a place where I've worked with bio and mass bio. It's something that Takeda feels very strongly about and of course is of personal interest and passion to me.

Taren: That's fantastic. When we talk to women, they often aspire to sit on a board. Is there any advice you can provide to other women who might want to sit if it's not on the bio board but a mass bio board or in the other kind of boards? What are some of the key things that they need to think about?

Liz: So I always tell women like don't necessarily be particular what board. A lot of it is about getting the opportunity to step up onto the board and then the other suggestion I would give is to kind of really just jump in with both feet and participate and be active. I think every woman I have spoken with who has stepped up to a board has often talked about – and men too, that initial experience of feeling a little bit like an imposter, but kind of just then kind of just diving in and really kind of learning the issues I think is the way not only to have the best success on a board, but also to make it the most fulfilling.

Taren: Fantastic. That's an issue where we started and that's about women and I know that you are a passionate supporter of women. Why is mentoring others so important to you?

Liz: I want to differentiate here a little bit between mentoring and also sponsorship.

Taren: Sure.

Liz: For those of us in the biotech and the pharmaceutical life sciences industry, continuing to attract and retain top diverse talent is really, really important and so for that to happen I think there really needs to be two things. There needs to be mentorship and sponsorship. I think of mentorship is when you take someone under your wing and you really help them progress and I think that that's something as leaders we all are responsible for doing. Sponsorship is when you kind of aren't necessarily mentoring, but you're actively promoting someone within the organization to help them advance their career providing them with visibility, opportunities, coaching along the way and for me both mentoring and sponsorship are important components. It's something that I work really hard to do with many others in the organization.

Taren: Wonderful. I want to thank you for spending some time with us. I'm fascinated by our conversation and I want to wish you continued great success in your roles at Takeda.

Liz: Thank you. Thank you for speaking with me today. This has been a wonderful discussion.

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