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*In this episode Taren meets with Elizabeth Pinto, senior director patient services Acadia Pharmaceuticals.*

**Taren:** Liz, welcome to the PharmaVOICE WoW podcast program.

**Liz:** Thank you. I'm excited to be here. And before we jump in, I do have to say that as we go through this conversation that anything I say, the views and opinions expressed as we discuss are that of my own and not of my employer, including Acadia Pharmaceuticals.

**Taren:** Okay, we've got that disclosure out of the way now. So we're ready to go. You have spent virtually your entire career working on patient-led initiatives. I'm curious, what led you to the healthcare industry, and why that particular focus?

**Liz:** I think one of the things that piqued my interest, growing up I was very close to one of my uncles who was in the pharmaceutical industry. He was in sales, and he was very passionate about the work that he did. So I think that necessarily piqued my interest in the healthcare industry as a whole. Then when I had the opportunity to both enter into a marketing role, which is what my degree in college was. So I was, first of all, excited that I could use my degree. And then second of all, to enter into a career that had a deeper purpose that made a difference in other people's lives is something that I jumped right into and was very excited about.

In terms of getting to the patient-led initiatives, I had experience across the board from HCP to channel, but at the end of the day, I think what drives me the most and makes me most passionate about the work that I do at the end of the day, are the patients and caregivers.

What I like about the roles that I've had and the role that I'm in now is that in the patient services realm and patient marketing realm, you get to see firsthand the fruits of your efforts. Say you're having a stressful day or working a lot of hours to get something done, when you go to a conference or get a letter, or a phone call and it's that of a patient themselves or a family member or a caregiver and they're thanking you or hugging you because of what you have done

to help them to get treatment, that is the biggest driver and repayment, and it makes an extra couple hours in a week seem like nothing.

So that's what drives me. Getting into a career that makes a difference in people's lives and have it as a career, it's a win-win for me.

**Taren:** I love that. That's an amazing sentiment. I always say that people, such as yourselves, with such great talents could be working in any industry but you chose the pharmaceutical industry to really give back. I think that's so admirable and truly inspiring.

**Liz:** Thank you. I used to joke about, well I could go into marketing. And as you know pharmaceuticals and the healthcare industry is highly regulated. It's complicated. You have to think out of the box. I love a challenge. I always think about selling gum or marketing gum just doesn't seem as fulfilling to me.

**Taren:** I get it. I think it's fantastic. Thank you for all that you do for on behalf of patients. I do think that when you get that feedback it is quite rewarding. I can't even imagine how fulfilling that is.

**Liz:** Absolutely. It's nothing. I used to always say that this is our business, but it's people's lives, and if there is anything that human to human we can provide to make someone else's journey just a tiny bit easier, we should absolutely do so. This is just something that is fundamental.

**Taren:** It's great. Let's talk about some of the high-touch patient experience programs that you have built. Obviously, you want to meet those unique customer needs and drive brand loyalty. As you talked about, it's really about the patients. I know when you were at Hamilton Communications you oversaw a billion dollar franchise at a time when media channel convergence was just starting to take shape – social media, websites, personalized patient programs. Talk to me about that experience and how you incorporate a patient needs into those evolving strategies.

**Liz:** Yeah, good question. Back when that was started, the sales calling on the prescribers was really the number one way that you got your brand out there in a way to drive that loyalty. I think it was just about that time here, as you mentioned, where this kind of patient focus took place. At the time that the brands that I was working on, I was working on kind of these ultra-rare diseases. Your typical bigger pharmaceutical strategies of commercials and things like that, it just wasn't realistic from this brand standpoint. So you had to be creative.

But then also, I think that was when, at least in the industry that I was in, you really realized the power of the patient. By integrating with the community, the advocacy groups, having advisory boards that have patients and caregivers on them as well as different focus groups, you really started to realize the impact that the patients will have. It was really about how do we reach these patients, which is very different than it is today. Some things are the same and some things are very different, and how do you provide a good experience, and ultimately, down the road it's about empowering them and making that experience great.

It was very different, I think. We looked at different media channels. You have your phone calls, you have your handouts, mailers; we did a lot of partnering with our specialty pharmacy partners as well as the patient advocacy groups just to start to form that relationship with the patient community because it was new. I think we started in a more unbranded manner. Because you really have to earn the right to talk about your brand. Really it was kind of a slow start but once the momentum started going, it really took off.

**Taren:** All those lessons are still applicable today and you are really at the forefront. You were also at the forefront of another, somewhat revolution within healthcare marketing, and that was the digital revolution when you were at Intouch. That had to be really exciting as well. You were at the ground floor of some really exciting initiatives.

**Liz:** Yeah, it was literally right when iPads for the sales reps, the iPad-based sales leads had started coming up. I was able to have the opportunity to work with a team to lead some projects for a couple of brands within dyslipidemia to create those digital sales leads alongside some sales reps and then roll them out to sales training, which was a learning experience, and a learning experience across the board. It was kind of the first time that that is was really becoming a thing and the first time that it had happened.

It's a really a fun experience because it gives you the opportunity to think out of the box, and how can we look and portray this data in a more dynamic way and be more engaging. It was absolutely neat to be at the beginning and then just see how it's evolved over time is just incredible.

**Taren:** That's cool. Then you moved from the agency side to the client side and joined Shire, ultimately being named director of US head of patient marketing. Now correct me if I'm wrong, but I think you provided strategic oversight for the patient engagement and patient services organization for the company's what – six billion dollar plus rare disease portfolio. Talk to me a little bit about that because I know Shire is heavily involved in that rare disease space and was also at the cutting edge of some of those early programs.

**Liz:** Well as we know, the industry is always buying, merging, spinning off. I was actually ultimately at Shire, which I believe is now Takeda. I was at Baxter, then we spun off our bioscience to Baxalta, and then we were acquired by Shire.

**Taren:** You need a scorecard.

**Liz:** You really do. You really do. I think that experience was incredible because Baxter and our bioscience division it was rare disease focused, and we were really creating our patient support programs and who we want to be at the time. I really had a great opportunity to join the team at Baxter and lead, at the time, patient and nurse marketing and really got to dig in and shape a support program that I think was probably the most rewarding, most interesting experience and incredible program that I've worked on.

We actually – as a little side story... This is in a community, again in that rare disease space with immune disorders. After starting and learning a little bit more about the community and sitting in focus groups, it really came out this idea of isolation; that these patients felt so alone because it is rare. It is a rare disease, and feeling like they are the only person that has this... and you could even see when we would do focus groups that complete strangers would be hugging and crying because they thought they were the only person that had this. To meet someone else that was going through a similar journey with, just meant so much to them. And you know, also in rare disease, they really went through a lot to get a diagnosis. From specialist to specialist, and maybe some misdiagnoses before they ultimately got the correct one and on treatment.

We shaped this program where the people who were on the phone and reaching out and providing the support to these patients and caregivers were patients themselves. Immediately it was that connection and the reminder that they're not alone. They understand where this person has been, they've walked in at least similar shoes to get to where they are and were able to individualize that, with everyone that they spoke to and create just a really meaningful difference in people's lives. I think that when we started, we had two full time and one part time if I remember correctly. I think at the time that I left there were 17. We ended up bringing on additional employees internally.

Just really from supporting kind of on all aspects of patient support from your hub and co-pay services, but then also that emotional side, the education side, kind of being able to connect to community, and I think that was one of the most interesting programs that I had the opportunity to work on within my career.

**Taren:** Great story. It shows the power of that connection and those relationships and having the right people in the right place to talk to the right people at the right time.

**Liz:** Absolutely. The insight about going through a lot of diagnoses before they got the right one, which was also interesting because a lot of times we, in the industry look and we're like, oh we'll just put some nurse navigators and that'll be more meaningful because other people are doing it. But I think the lesson that I learned is that it has to really be specific for the communities that you're serving. A nurse being the first outreach in the community because they had been kind of burned by the medical community is probably not the best first point of contact. But having a peer be that first point of contact was really, really meaningful.

**Taren:** That's an excellent anecdote. Thank you so much for sharing that with us. Let's move on to where you are right now as senior director of patient services at Acadia Pharmaceuticals. Again, you're responsible for a big portfolio business, and it's the patient services strategy and operations, as well as access marketing. So what does your job entail right now, and a little bit more specific, aside with the jargon, and what are your short term and long term goals in terms of patient services at the company?

**Liz:** My role leading patient services, I have a team that we do kind of three buckets of tasks. So we have data and analytics from our support services that constantly evaluates to keep an eye on metrics. We have running our support, our reimbursement support, let's say, or financial assistance support. So we have our hub and our hub provider running the day to day of that; it's a third party. And then we also have a field reimbursement team that we support. That's kind of under that bucket. And then the last bucket being access marketing, and access marketing being everything from branding, messaging, communicating out our patient services, but then also creating messaging to educate physicians and offices on what coverage looks like, as well as what access looks like overall for our drugs.

So that is what we do. And then on top of that, of course, is the strategy part, the strategic part in planning and making sure that our strategy is both patient centered and aligns to our ultimate organizational goals.

**Taren:** In your opinion, and this is sort of the softball question, but what is the difference between brand marketing and then patient marketing?

**Liz:** I get this question a lot actually. So how I like to describe it is, you have your typical, let's say, sales and marketing, and they are responsible for driving demand. So they are responsible for creating awareness of perhaps a disease state awareness of your brand, creating urgency to treat, or activating consumers or patients and caregivers to ask for a certain brand to get a script written, essentially.

What patient marketing or patient services marketing is, is it shouldn't stop there. The experience and brand experience shouldn't stop there. What we do then is ultimately we're responsible for creating an easy and smooth process to access the medication that's for both our healthcare professionals and our patient and caregivers, as well as keep them on treatment. So it's really helping them get access easily to the medication that their doctors prescribe for them, and then also providing support in different ways, strategies to help them stay on the treatment that they are prescribed. And then as well as creating the awareness of the programs and the messaging, and the different materials that are needed to best support our community.

**Taren:** Thank you, that's great. And that really leads me to my next question, which is wrap around services – wrap around patient services, we're seeing that as a trend in what pharmaceutical companies are offering beyond just the pill or the injection, or whatever the mode of treatment is. It's about making that patient experience with the treatment more comprehensive. Is that something you're seeing as well?

**Liz:** Absolutely. With patient affordability is an ongoing challenge and you have players, like the insurance companies that seem to make it sometimes difficult or increasingly difficult for patients to get the medications or more expensive. I mean look at the accumulator program, for example, you have that in play. Then also, you have the doctors offices that have limited time and resources at the end of the day they have to –just based on how our system works here in the United States essentially they're operating like a business. And then we don't even touch on the pharmacy aspect at that point.

I think given that and realizing the climate and constant changing policies, that support services that can help with coverage and costs are essential to getting patients the brands that they've been prescribed and helping them stay on their treatment.

**Taren:** Agreed. To switch tacks a little bit here, let's talk about you. You have received a number of awards recognizing your dedication to patients. So I'd like to know what motivates you to keep challenging the status quo and thinking differently?

**Liz:** I think in general as a personality trait I love a challenge, and I love building and fixing things. So those things are what give me energy. But I think what motivates to keep thinking differently is first and foremost the communities we serve. I mean I truly believe that if you do right by the patient that the business will follow. So I think that's first and foremost.

I think second is the teams that you work with and the people that you work with are essential to keeping you motivated and challenged as you move forward. One thing I've learned is I used to say sometimes that I think my job is easy, I ask patients and caregivers what they would like

and what they need and then I do it. I think when you talk to your customers on a regular basis, they either tell you outright or they'll tell you another way to put it, be it non-verbal or other ways what they need, and I think that's what keeps us thinking differently. It's like okay, this is what they need, how can we meet those needs, or how can we support that? At the end of the day we're all people, and I think that we can come together and challenge ourselves to find ways to meet those needs and being open to that and looking to other industries and other companies that are doing things well are also ways to keep challenging.

Closely working with compliance and legal teams is super important. Because I think what I've found to be the most impactful is if you go to your legal and compliance team and have a good relationship with them and can sit down and it's not a question of if we can do it, this is where we want to get to, how do we get there, right, and then you can kind of build it together.

**Taren:** Right, and you figure out the solution together. I think that's great. You talked about your teams. Talk to me about your leadership style. How would you define yours?

**Liz:** I don't know that I could sum it up in one clear style, but there's a few, I think, leadership styles that I pull from. One being the idea of a servant leadership and helping the team to develop it and perform and putting the team first, is one thing that I really try to live by. Authentic leadership principles like openness, honesty, transparency, and then the kind of principles of transformational leadership as well, just inspiring and motivating to continue to innovate, create change to help grow and change and shape success.

There's a few other things. One is, I always hire people smarter than me. I always hire people smarter than me. I've learned also that when you make other people look good and help other people succeed, it helps you as well. If you get to investing in the growth and development of the teams, finding out what motivates them – the same thing doesn't motivated everyone, so finding out what motivates them. I would say that I like to have fun and have a relationship with my team, so I think towards purpose driven performance.

**Taren:** I think you're very modest. I get the feeling from you that mentoring is also very important too. And have you had several mentors in your life? And do you mentor folks right now?

**Liz:** Yeah, absolutely. I think some mentors I've had it's been more formal and some have been more informal. And looking back at that, they really helped mentor me and shape where I am. I think I've gotten so much, both from an interaction standpoint, but then also from watching and learning by their example about how to get to where they are and where they've been and looking up to them.

I also think it's important from a career development standpoint, not just in terms of learning skills, but ultimately you form deeper relationships with these people and it opens opportunities in the future as well. I personally take a vested interest in people that I mentor or coach. I really like to pull people up – recognize, get people recognized if they're in a different function for the hard working and skills that they have.

**Taren:** What's the one piece of advice, if you could go back, that you would give to your younger self?

**Liz:** I think that I – and this is something I tell my teams as well – my director supports this - Work will always be there.

**Taren:** It always is.

**Liz:** Work will always be there. And I think there was a time people that are overachievers and just want to have everything kind of “perfect,” which we know that is not attainable, they work a lot and wear themselves out. And I think that you have to take time for yourself and your relationship outside of work. Work will always be there. You can't wear yourself thin because you're not as effective either.

**Taren:** Awesome. I couldn't agree with you more. It's always there, somehow or another. It doesn't matter how long [TALKING OVER] how long or short your to do list is, it's always there. Finally, after having a really successful and a very acclaimed career, can you identify one wow moment? Was it the program that you did when you were over at Baxter Baxalta Shire?

**Liz:** Yeah. It's hard to narrow it down to one.

**Taren:** I get it but I'm going to force you to.

**Liz:** I think that that program was huge to me personally in terms of what we were able to do as a team and as a community to build up that program and really come together both as a team and a community and kind of take what was once so isolating and make it just a little bit less alone for the patients that we served. I think that was one of the biggest wow moments. I think even within that, there's a more defined wow moment as well.

While working on that program, there was a tool that was developed and essentially what it is, is this infusion therapy. Obviously, it's scary for children to go into a hospital and have to get an infusion or have a nurse come into their home and have to get an infusion. There was a

therapeutic play kit created, which essentially was this bear called Iggy, and he had all human markers like elbows, knees, cheeks, etc., and then there was a kit that came with him that was all, it was real infusion supplies without the needles, of course. We would provide this to children, along with some guides to therapeutic play to help them kind of prepare for the medical environment and the infusion. Often kids can communicate through therapeutic play about what they're feeling because they can't always articulate it. This was provided to children throughout the community and even adults throughout the community.

I went to a conference and it was a patient and caregiver conference and families, and we had a booth. We actually ended up having what we called a big Iggy – a person in the suit with the Iggy suit, with the bear suit on. He was at our booth. This little kid came running up screaming Iggy's name and gave him the biggest hug. And just stood there and hugged and mom was crying. I looked over and she said, "my son has been getting infusions and been hugging Iggy for every infusion. I'm crying because now to see Iggy holding hands and my son in a good enough place for Iggy to hug him is just so meaningful." I think I cried along with her I believe. I still get teary-eyed when I talk about it, that the impact that it can have on lives.

**Taren:** Liz, I want to thank you so much for being part of our WoW podcast program. It was great speaking with you. And thank you so much for sharing so many of your insights that you've gained through your career.

**Liz:** Thank you so much. I really appreciate it.

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