

**May 26, 2021**

*Welcome to WoW – the Woman of the Week podcast from PharmaVOICE. This episode was made possible by a generous sponsorship from eClinical Solutions. For more information, visit [eclinicalsol.com](http://eclinicalsol.com).*

*In this episode, Taren Grom, Co-Founder and Editor-in-Chief of PharmaVOICE meets with Katrina Rice, Chief Delivery Officer, Data Services at eClinical Solutions.*

**Taren:** Katrina, welcome to the WoW podcast program.

**Katrina:** Thank you. I am so excited to be here.

**Taren:** We're excited to have you here. Before we dig in to your career journey and everything, I want to ask you about your title, which I have not heard before – Chief Delivery Officer, Data Services. Tell me what this means and what it means in terms of your role at eClinical Solutions and by the way, congratulations on your recent promotion.

**Katrina:** Thank you so much for that. My role as a Chief Delivery Officer at Data Services is to ensure that we deliver a scalable, global enterprise-wide services to our clients with respect to our data management biostatistics services. And in addition, that includes maximizing the technologies that we use, which would include our own clinical data analytics platform which is illuminate and any other products that we use to deliver our services.

I'm all operational responsible to ensure that I deliver, that I scale a team of individuals that will deliver this service with the highest quality at an enterprise level, combining our services around our data management and stats, as I noted, with our technologies.

**Taren:** Katrina, I think you're starting a trend. I love the fact that you are a Chief Delivery Officer. That is truly unique and I think that it really speaks to what your mission is. It's fantastic. Tell me a little bit about your career journey that led you to your current role. Obviously, you have a ton of skill sets that have gotten you to this position.

**Katrina:** So just starting back in my journey, I don't know if you can actually tell, but I am a southerner at heart. So I was born and raised in Huntsville, Alabama and went to a historically black college and institution, which I'm very proud of. I have a Masters degree actually in computer science. So I've always known from a little girl that I was a technical type person. Really started my career done through college just was able to do a number of internships, really being a programmer, which of course is unique and different, especially for a woman of color to have that background and really be focused on programming.

So my career really started, I worked for the government. I worked for a government contractor, the Department of Energy where I was a programmer – a database programmer

actually for a group of Ph.D. chemical engineers, which was very, very unique and different especially starting my career, a young college student and you're working with these very, very highly scientific skilled chemical engineers, which is a very difficult engineer, and I was their programmer. So I did all types of database programming for them – and I would say myself quite good. Interesting enough (not to toot my own horn) I used to write programs for some of the guys in my class, so here to tell you that women can be great programmers as well.

So career kind of started there, so I spent a number of years – I actually was an intern for the government before I actually had the opportunity to move into life sciences. And just the thinking around – I don't know who told me, but you know just to think that you never stay at your first job after college for more than five years. Someone just told me that and it stuck in my head. So after spending like five years there I figure hey, it's time for me to look and find something new. So I started to put my résumé out there and apply everywhere and I had my desire of where I wanted to go because I was actually living in Tennessee. I had my desire where I wanted to go, which was actually to move to Texas because I had this desire – I love Texas. It's hot all the time. The food is great. But I guess that wasn't the direction for me. So I actually had a recruiter who contacted me about a position at Bayer Healthcare Pharmaceuticals here in Connecticut, which is where I still reside.

So the first thing that came to my thought in mind was number one – I don't think African-Americans live in Connecticut because me being a southerner had no – did not have a thought that many African-Americans lived in Connecticut. So that was definitely interesting to find that wasn't true. So I had the opportunity and a young couple at that time – I was married, had a very young son – and Bayer, actually I went up for an interview and before I was getting back in my cab to go home, the recruiter called me and they wanted to make me an offer.

So that was a lot to think about, career changing not only to move – being a southerner to move from the south to the northeast, which I knew nothing about and had no family, but to take this position because I was just a programmer. I had no experience in life sciences and clinical trials and none of that, but I was a great programmer. So I actually took the opportunity to move to Connecticut with my very young family, no relatives for almost 16, 18 hours away and that's where I kind of started. That's how I started into the journey. I became a programmer at Bayer and learned so much about the industry. I had great mentors. I continue to be a really, really seasoned programmer, and my career kind of progressed from that time.

After awhile, I had been at Bayer for about 10 years, I was not looking – actually I was settled and felt like that's where my home was, and then I had an offer – another recruiter, someone had told them about me and I had worked on system deployments for the metadata application at Bayer. And at that time eClinical was looking to start this unit and the division, and I was given – an opportunity recruiter told me about it and said hey, this is a small new company, they're growing, this is exciting, you'll get a chance to make your mark and actually grow. And so I said, "Hey, why not." So I talked it over and said, "Hey, I'm young and why not." And so I've been at eClinical and my career has progressed at eClinical starting with a very, very small growing organization to where we are now. So that's kind of the progression of my career.

**Taren:** Katrina, that's two huge big leaps – one to Bayer and then one to eClinical. Where did you get the – what's the right word, gumption, faith, courage to do that because it's not easy just to pick up your life and move halfway across the country to a place you don't know, to a job you don't know. I mean where did you get that resilience from?

**Katrina:** Ultimately, I think is always kind of being told in your life you can't and I tend to be a person who actually has a hard time with people telling me what I can do anyway, and to especially almost tell me that I won't succeed. So for me, it's a little bit of competition. I'm a risk taker somewhat I think at heart to say I tend to kind of get, I would say, somewhat bored. So I do like – I actually like challenge. So I tend to be a person who will get bored fast and actually like a little bit of life challenge.

And for me it was my – and I believe and truly have I think your gut, when people say that is your gut – my gut I feel very good about and it hasn't led me wrong. And my gut was telling me those were the right times in my life to try and make a change and make a difference. And I truly believe that just from how I was raised, that I have a responsibility to others. Others are looking at me. So at some little African-American girl sitting somewhere who was probably told that she couldn't or she can't do something. So I have a responsibility to say yeah, you can. So I truly believe that for me it's about yeah, taking a chance in life and being okay to step out and I like to say step out on faith and be resilient in it.

**Taren:** That's amazing. And I love that step out in faith and as you said, you are an example and a role model for other women and other women of color. That is a mantle of responsibility that some people aren't always comfortable with, but it appears that you have some pretty big shoulders and you're okay to carry that. What does that mean to you?

**Katrina:** So it actually means a huge amount. I do not take it lightly that my responsibility to many – and I will say I have a responsibility of course first and foremost to myself to actually do the absolute best I can and pick myself up, even if I need to pivot or I fail, is no concept of staying down. I was just raised that way.

Second, I truly believe we have a moral responsibility to give back. And giving back a lot of times we think about in terms of even financial giving or sometimes just time giving, but I also think mentoring, coaching and responsibility to social demonstration that we're supposed to give back to others to show others that it is possible, that I understand your struggle and look, if I can do it you are more than fit to do it. And that we have a responsibility to help those do it. And so for me, yeah, it's big shoulders to fill, but I think just morally that's my responsibility is to carry that, and that's the way I was raised.

I'm actually a middle child. So for many people who understand if you are middle child that is always – you're always trying to find your way. And I remember I was telling my mother who's unfortunately deceased now, I remember telling her I'm trying to find my place in this family. Because you're not the oldest; you're surely not the baby that everybody is doting on. And in my family my oldest sister just needed to run everything and my mother positioned her to lead and then my younger sister hey, she's the baby; everybody is just adoring her.

And so for me it was trying to really find my place and I think that also drove me to be hey, you know what, I'm going to show you I'm going to take my place. So I'm not going to allow you to define what my place is. So that somewhat I really believe has molded me because – I don't – I want to be in control. So for me to take my place in society, in my career, in my job, that's me. So that's why I'm confident to do that because I always felt like I didn't know what my place was in the family, but then when I got the gumption and energy I said okay, you don't have to tell me. I'm going to just take it.

**Taren:** I love that, to take your place and not have somebody define what your place is and to figure all that out. You're quite remarkable. I want to go back to a part of your earlier conversation was your choice of career which was unusual for a woman. Let's face it, there just aren't a lot of women in technology still today. And so you must often find yourself as one of the only ones in the room who looks like you. How do you figure that out in terms of taking your place at the table and how has that led you to navigating your career? Because it's not easy.

**Katrina:** Absolutely. And it's still not easy. You always find like you're trying to define yourself. You're trying to prove that you're worthy. And for me what drove my direction because I actually initially went to college and I have a cousin who I totally admire. So I had a cousin and she was a marketing major, and she was beautiful and she had graduated and had this great job. And for me, as a young girl, you always look, that's who you're looking up to. And so I initially started in college to say I was going to major in marketing because I'm saying – and I know those at my company who are in marketing would never believe I was originally thinking I was going to be a marketing major. But I actually felt I want to be a marketing major because I looked for this person and she was incredible to me, and she had everything, and I was thinking hey, that's exactly what I wanted to do.

When I got into I started taking some of the classes, I just again my gut it wasn't there and I trust my gut. I didn't have it in my gut. I wasn't excited about – and as you hear me speak is very obvious when I'm excited about something. So I wasn't excited about it. I actually had my adviser – actually he was the one who told me 'I don't think this is what you should be doing. You seem to be a technical person. You like to solve things. You tend to want a lot of change and I think you should actually look at trying either engineering field or computers.'

So he was the one who noticed, and that's why I really feel your gut and what you radiate people will see that in you and those will tell you, guide your footsteps. Like I said, he was the one who actually said 'I think you need to look into that. I think that's going to be more fitting for where' – and I actually did good in some of the classes of course, but it just – it didn't bring that wow factor to what I was feeling. And so I looked at both of them and I just decided, I said hey, let me try the computer science. Because it wasn't just a computer programming. If you think about it, it has a science in it and so it was a little bit more beyond just being a straight programmer. It had the strategy, it had theory behind it. And so that was all the things that kind of drove me.

So that's how I actually end up going into that field. And once I did it was like what have I been doing. Like that was it for me. I actually had a wonderful experience and again, as I told you and most – I would never call names, but most people would never realize I programmed and wrote programs for some of the males in my program. I would help them write their programs for homework. So hey, women can do it.

**Taren:** That's amazing and you obviously have a passion for it because you can hear it in your voice, you hear it in your enthusiasm. So that has taken you all the way through to where you are now. I'd love to talk to you about what are some of the hot trends you're tracking right now related to eClinical services. There's a lot of buzz out now about AI, machine learning, but also decentralized clinical trials. What is it that you're looking at?

**Katrina:** A great question. Let me phrase it, what's keeping me excited about being at eClinical and what we're doing in the industry. As you can see, I take control so I kind of reshaped your question, I hope you're okay with that, but what is making me excited...

**Taren:** As if I had a choice. Go for it!

**Katrina:** ... about the direction and what we're doing at eClinical. So just a little bit about the history. We started more as a service company. When I joined eClinical, we were a service company. We were delivering data management, biostats. We were delivering those services and we were using the metadata platform, which I had again deployed it there. So more service-drive organization had been successful at that. Definitely saw the need that there was a need in the market to have a product such as our product that we have now, which is our illuminate clinical analytics. So clearly it was just conversion to say we're great, we know the data, but now it's still missing in the markets and technology, and that's how we kind of brung up and spun our illuminate product.

Why am I excited? Why do I still stay at eClinical now nearly after 12 years, which is still a long bit of time in these days to be at a company is because of our product and our services. So being in an organization where I have the opportunity to not only just influence my primary responsibility is the data services and making sure we can deploy that, but also have an insight in being able to help mold and shape our product. So it's hot.

We have a product, great product and we have great services and we're like bringing those together for our clients so that they can actually make sure that they can run and execute their clinical studies as well as once they've executed those clinical studies, how do they have insights into their data across their studies. And if any of us have been keeping up with everything in the industry with the pandemic, the pandemic actually exposed the importance to actually have a great platform that you can actually look at all your clinical data in one area, as well as execution of services from people, to your processes and technologies, to make sure that you can get your drugs to market faster and be able to make business decisions.

So that's what's happening. That's what's exciting me about still being at eClinical because I feel I have an opportunity. I'm not limited to saying I just have to do the data services, again my

primary responsibility, but I do have insight and I have the opportunity to shape how our product is going and then how my people my team, not just our clients but our own teams use our products to actually expedite and actually give this, I would say, innovation in real time ability for our clients to get their drugs to market.

So that is really what's happening at eClinical is we're growing very fast, both of these business units and making sure that we can pivot and we can continue to grow with the market. Make sense?

**Taren:** Yes. Kudos to you all and all the great work that you're doing there at eClinical Solutions and finding that way to make the journey better for patients because at the end of the day that's what it's all about. And so obviously again, you can hear your passion in what you're doing and how you are changing the trajectory of the industry which is so important and it is time for innovation. The pandemic as you said has exposed so many areas where improvement is needed and that certainly is one of them. Talk to me a little bit about your leadership style and I know you like to take control, we've established that, so but that's – I can't imagine that's how you lead your teams because you also have a very empathetic nature. So talk to me about how you develop your teams and how you lead your teams.

**Katrina:** Great question. I would say from a leadership, definitely as you have identified my leadership style is to drive to results, as well as provide that supportive nature for that growth and innovation of the teams, as well as being comfortable with the difficult times that will come up and how do you grow and shape a team to that. Being that we are still – we have services, any service-driven organization that mode that we have to lead in and we have to is really more of a consulting mode to really being able to assess the situation and look at and provide recommendations based on data-driven why and justify why we should be doing something or why we should recommend for our clients to do something. And that same style has to come, what I've seen has to come when it comes to employees.

So really to actually give them an environment where they can feel that they can actually be empowered to drive while maintaining that ability for them to come to you for your coaching and your support and again, being in a service organization is always this fine line of being overly accommodating and just doing whatever our clients wants as opposed to being a consultant and really helping to guide. And I find that same leadership style has to happen, especially with our employees and especially for me, I'm still growing. I'm still learning as a leader that this evolution of the millennials and how they work and what they need is actually really stretching me and stretching my style because I've been doing this for awhile even though if you see me, you can't tell, you'll still think I'm 20s – but being able to stretch then and allow teams to feel that they are empowered to drive, but still keeping a pulse where you can give them that oversight and support. I like to think about let them go far enough until if you see them tipping or about to fall you be there to pull them back.

So that seems to be – and I'm a hands-on. I'm a hands-on manager. I love the points when my team call me and say, what do you think about this. What would you do in this situation? So those are the relationships that I'm really continuing to work and grow with my team is to kind

of develop that. And it's not easy because I do have a dominating style. I do have, as you can tell my tone, I'm really passionate about things and sometimes that passion is taken in a way that is not in the best light, but I'm still working through that.

**Taren:** Well, I think that's amazing first of all, and that you acknowledge the fact that you still have things to work on. Not a lot of leaders will be that vulnerable with us. And so I think that really is a testament to your personality as well as your DNA and showing who you are as a person and very authentic. It's very inspiring.

Let's go back a little bit. I know obviously we talked about you being a role model and I know you also are an advocate for mentoring and sponsorship, which is obviously different than the mentoring. Those are really important to you. You're an active participant in several organizations such as the Healthcare Businesswomen's Association and Women of Color in Pharma and you're also a member of Chief of a private network for women in senior leadership. Tell me about these organizations and what they provide to you and what you provide to them.

**Katrina:** So I absolutely think it is continuously important to be engaged with outside groups of like-minded people because again we're – as long as we continue to live we need to grow and we need to evolve, and I feel you can learn something from so much diverse organization and diverse people. So for me for these organizations, it's really important for me to just keep abreast of what's happening out there in market and you hear a lot to keep abreast of what women are truly doing in the industry and market and how they're reshaping because we have some amazing women that in all sectors of the industry and sectors of life and I just feel like to hear those stories and to be a part and I like to see be amongst the power that people bring is just so incredible and even more inspiring to me to actually hear and be a part of these organizations.

So really what I get is more I don't feel I'm giving a huge amount, I feel I'm getting so much from being in the presence of so many like-minded women, so many powerful women. And then when you're engaging, you know sometimes when you're going through and when I'm going through difficult situations and hear things and have the potential to have always done something – to hear someone else's story and to hear that you're not a misfit and it's not just you, that others have went down that path and this is how they recovered, I think are more encouraging to me. And at this point in my career what I need a lot of is for people that have walked that journey and still are and how have they kind of adjusted to it and tailored themselves so that they can continue to be inspiring and motivating to others, so very important.

I'm really excited about being a member of Chief. I just recently last year became a member, and all I can just say is that it has just been an incredible experience to go to these sessions with my cohort and hearing again, meeting women in different sectors and hearing some of the stories and having a group that I can confide in and they hold me accountable for things that I've said I'm going to do and then I'll be open and come back to those that haven't done it and they're coaching me. So it's been incredible, as well as to use all the resources. Chief always

has incredible speakers that are presenting and giving tips. So that's been really encouraging at this point in my career.

**Taren:** That's awesome and it shows the importance of a network and not in that typical sense of networking, but having a network of trusted colleagues, advisers, your own personal board of directors if you will who can help guide you to that next stage in your career or to even help you implement what you want to do at this stage of your career as you noted so crucial and so important and it also gives you those insights to help other women and widen the path for those to follow behind you which is important as well.

**Katrina:** Absolutely.

**Taren:** It goes back to that mantle of being a role model.

**Katrina:** Absolutely. Absolutely.

**Taren:** Excellent. So let's talk about what we need to do as an industry to widen the path for other women and particularly women of color. What can we do better? What should we do more of? What should we stop doing?

**Katrina:** Great questions. So the first thing I will say what we can do to widen is to be at the places that these women of color are. So on too many times when you hear companies and you're talking about networking or interview in recruiting events being again proud alumni of our historical black college and institution and it was the best decision in my life to make that decision to attend to be in an environment where people look like me and we have a group of people who care about and wanting to make sure that we succeed.

So one thing is to that I think first needs to start, is for us to be open and honest. How many companies are even going to those colleges and universities recruiting which has those people? So how can you recruit if you're not where the people are. So you need to go to where the people are, open up your minds on where you're going to get educated African-American women, where are they sitting? A lot of those are at the historical black colleges and institutions. Our first vice president, our Vice President of the United States, that's where she came from. So to go to those places I think that's the first thing that we can do.

The second is to drop our stereotypes of what a lot of people have about African-American women. That just because some are – and I'm not the only one, a number that we are confident. We're going to be authentic. We're going to speak with authority, that that shouldn't be fearful and we shouldn't be stereotyped for that and being okay and confident to say that yeah, we have some women in the sciences areas that are incredible that can bring you what you're looking for.

So one, I think being open to really we talk about diversity, inclusion, but as an industry what are we doing to really make that change. The talk sounds good, but where is the – when the rubber

meets the road, let's look at the numbers and the data. So I would say first going to where they are and giving some an opportunity.

I think back and I'm so grateful and so passionate that a little girl from Huntsville, Alabama was given the opportunity to come into this industry. Someone saw something and the person who made me an offer, he did not look like me. He was a male and he was a white male, but he felt something in me. He saw something in me that he was willing to give me a chance. And I would say that's what we should be looking for in our industry is to go to where people are, give them those opportunities and drop the stereotypes. That just because, because you're going to see it, you have to – I told you my story where my confidence and why my take control has come from. Remember we all have a story, and some of the ways that you see that doesn't need to be fearful. It needs to be hey, you have someone who is a driver, who's confident in what they're doing. So giving them an opportunity.

**Taren:** I think that is tremendous advice and what great insights into where we are now and where we need to get to. So thank you so much for sharing that with us. What pieces of advice do you have to other women in the field, something you wish you had known sooner that you know now?

**Katrina:** Something that I wish that someone would have told me and prepared me for was that it wasn't going to be easy and how do you pivot and work around that because it really – again, I'm extremely grateful and so excited about my career and I've been so blessed to where I've come and what I'm attempting to do and so excited about other future state things that I have on my – if you want to say my bucket list – but maybe I would actually say is for someone to reach out, to reach out to those who have set the path, which I don't feel I did and wish someone had told me is to build that network, that you have others and be just as bold to reach out to maybe someone you don't even know to ask their expertise and their advice on how they would deal with situations – because I do feel I wish I had known that hey, you being a great programmer is not enough. It's the other things that you need to hone in on – and it's almost like someone that can walk you through maybe this path and how to deal with it.

I wish someone – and it wasn't maybe that I would look back and say I probably didn't do a good job. I didn't build this network and engage myself probably until a number of organizations where like-minded women that have been around. I just didn't engage myself because I don't feel I focused enough on that. I focused more on the true business, the industry part, learning and being this guru that I was attempting to try to be. Not to say I am at all. And not that building this network and getting involved in these industry network groups and even social groups that have powerful women that can help you. So my advice would be that is just as important as building this career that you're trying to do.

**Taren:** I think that's great advice. I hear that quite often. Heads down doing your job, getting to that next level, all of that is so important, but along the way sometimes it gets lost. In gathering that network in building those relationships because those are what will sustain you through the rest of your career and not only from a business perspective, but from a personal

perspective. Trusted colleagues and just people who enrich your life that it's just it's well worth the time and the investment.

**Katrina:** Absolutely.

**Taren:** And as we round out here and because this is our WoW podcast program, I would like for you to narrow down if you can to one accomplishment or one thing that changed your career trajectory and that created that wow moment for you that has left a lasting impression on you.

**Katrina:** So if I think about in my – it's been a number of wow moments in my life and some of those definitely have come professionally, as many of those that have come personally for things that I've done and worked on in the community. But I would say the one thing, the wow that is from a career perspective as starting early days and working at eClinical and seeing a department grow. When we actually started the department, I actually had maybe eight people, if that, but once I saw the number of people and the growth hit over 100 it was something in my heart, as well as when I saw that first revenue number hit from the six digits to the eight, that was personally for me that wow. That actually showed me that look at the impact. And those were things that I could directly point that I had some impact to. I didn't have all, but I had a huge amount of responsibility and the impact to seeing that.

So that was the wow factor in me to actually see and to be a part of our organization to see growth from very small organization to where we are now and to see those numbers hit and see that team grow and actually it actually was really I think I can define that was my wow moment. Because I know and even at points in my career, points in my life during this position I didn't believe I could actually have a part and help grow and I'm quite sure it was others who didn't have that faith or belief that I could. So to actually see that was that wow factor.

**Taren:** I am wowed by that. I think that is a tremendous moment and a tremendous accomplishment and I can see that you're going to have many more wow moments. If you have this conversation again in two or three years, you'll have even a bigger wow moment. So congratulations to you again on your recent promotion and thank you so much for sharing your insights on such a wide variety of topics and being so authentic. Thank you so much. It was delightful to meet you, Katrina, and I wish you all the best and much more success ahead.

**Katrina:** Thank you so much and I sincerely appreciate you even thinking I was worthy to be a part of the podcast. So thank you so much and good work and great luck on your future success.

**Taren:** More than worthy. You have a seat at the table my friend. You have a seat at the table.

*Thank you for listening to this episode of WoW – the Woman of the Week podcast. And thanks to eClinical Solutions for making this episode possible. For more information, visit*



## PharmaVOICE Podcast Series

*eclinicalsol.com. And don't forget to check out our other WoW episodes at [pharmavoice.com/wow](http://pharmavoice.com/wow).*