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In this episode, Taren Grom, Editor-in-Chief of PharmaVOICE Magazine meets with Belinda Termeer, President and Co-Founder, Termeer Foundation.

Taren: Belinda, welcome to the WoW podcast program. It's so great to have you with us.

Belinda: Thank you, Taren. It's so nice to be here. Thank you for having me.

Taren: It's our pleasure. Truly it's a delight to meet you, and I'm sure you hear this all the time that your husband is much beloved in the biotech and life sciences world and the world is truly a better place because of his pioneering spirit and generous attention to mentoring. I didn't have the pleasure of meeting him, but I know so many people who did, and I can't tell you the wonderful things that they say about him. So I feel like I've gotten to know him through them. But you and Henri started the Termeer family office. Tell me about the foundation and the role it plays in scientific discovery and how this lends itself to his pioneering spirit.

Belinda: Yes. So as you said, Henri left an incredible legacy of connecting life science professionals through his constant mentoring and making introductions of people with like minds and interests. He touched many of us immeasurably with his vision and courage of lessons learned. The foundation was created with the purpose of identifying and supporting the next generation of biotech leaders and developing programs that would help foster those connections. So it's essentially to connect the biotech and life science world of innovators until every patient has a cure.

Taren: That's amazing. And you two started this together obviously and then it developed into something bigger didn't it, and you now have several offshoots of the foundation. Tell me a little bit about that.

Belinda: Well, actually a year after Henri's passing I was approached by a number of biotech CEOs who wanted to continue Henri's legacy, and so that was sort of the impetus of actually formalizing the foundation and creating it as a nonprofit 501c3 organization. So that was the start of that.

Taren: That's amazing. How did that make you feel when those individuals came up to you? Were you in a place and ready to make that leap?

Belinda: You know it was a very difficult thing. It took me quite a while to just grasp that Henri was no longer here, and I just was so touched by so many of them wanting to continue his

legacy. And I think if Henri was alive he would have been so surprised to know that he touched so many of them. And from bio wanting to honor a leader every year, they asked if I was okay with having a Henri Termeer Award, and then I was approached about wanting to name the park in Kendall Square after Henri. It used to be called North Square. So we did the renaming of the square to the Henri Termeer Square and today we have his statue in that park and it has a couple of his quotes, and it's just a touching legacy.

Taren: That's so wonderful. Tell me what was one of his favorite quotes.

Belinda: One of the quotes at the entrance of the park, his quote was "It was pretty much a dream and today you can walk around Boston and Cambridge and find these dreams all over the place." He was so proud of this industry, so that was one of the quotes.

And then there is a reflecting pool with a giving tree in the square and it says "You need courageous people who pursue their goals believing it is all extremely worthwhile and who surround themselves with highly skilled and equally passionate people."

He was all about making sure that the passionate people who were leading this industry and they felt as passionate about patients as he was.

Taren: That's amazing. What a wonderful living legacy to him and continuing on the dream that he had. It really is very touching. So thank you for sharing that with us.

Belinda: Sure.

Taren: I know that you and Henri also established the Henri and Belinda Termeer Center for Targeted Therapies at Mass Gen about 10 years ago. What was the initial goal of the center and tell me has the goal changed over time?

Belinda: Well, initially we established this with the Mass General Hospital Cancer Center to support new clinical trials that will help advance a discovery and development of novel cancer therapies for patients. And I actually realized that after my own cancer treatment at the center that everyone's cancer is different, and Henri of course knew that targeted genetic therapies was the important step in cancer research so that's when we decided to support the center and we named it The Termeer Center for Targeted Therapies. It currently has 21 physicians and scientists. I just got an update a couple of weeks ago, so they currently have 500 patients that are enrolled in clinical trials every year, including 150 first in human clinical trials per year.

Taren: Wow.

Belinda: Yeah. And then the last 10 years, it has had 20 FDA approvals for cancer-related drugs that have come out of the Termeer Center. It's pretty impressive and most clinical trials in cancer actually goes through the Termeer Center.

Taren: I would say that's more than impressive. That is unbelievable. Wow. Congratulations.

Belinda: We're very proud of it.

Taren: Yes. I would hope you are. That is just amazing. You noted earlier that your husband was such a dedicated mentor and really looked forward to bringing that next generation of leaders forward, and as part of the foundation you bring together a bunch of top leaders as part of the Termeer network. So let's talk about that first and then we'll talk about the mentoring, which I also know is a passion for you as well. Tell me about the Termeer Network and how that works.

Belinda: Henri was brilliant at bringing together people from not just biotech or life science industries, but just from academia, from hospitals and he would just make the connections of all of the networks that he was involved in. He was extremely connected to and on the boards of many of these organizations. So he just made those connections, and as part of the Termeer Foundation I kept those Termeer Network connections going and we continue to build on that and now we have even a greater number of network CEOs and executives that are involved in the Termeer Foundation.

Taren: That's excellent. Talk to me about mentoring again. I know that was one of Henri's passions, but it's also one of your passions. Tell me about why this is important to you to continue this piece of his legacy.

Belinda: Henri actually was mentoring over 50 CEOs at the time of his passing and he really did coach and mentor many throughout the course of his career, so that commitment and the mentoring for the next generation of CEOs was his belief was that CEOs could change the world and I sort of lived and breathe that on a daily basis. And I felt that there were so many that wanted to continue his legacy, so I have their support and that's the backbone of the foundation is bringing together a number of these mentors and making sure that they are committed to mentoring that next generation of young Termeer fellows.

Taren: That's awesome. I can't imagine what those dinner table conversations were like for you all. Really quite inspiring I would think and really quite – your husband being such a visionary, did you sometimes think is what he's talking about possible? Because he really was such a future facing individual.

Belinda: You know, he was. He, for some reason, just saw the picture so much bigger than so many people could envision, and then he kind of brought people together and made that happen. He just worked hard in making those connections and just making sure that it could happen; we could make a difference in whatever it is that he needed to work on.

He helped create a public policy organization called Knee High and that was bringing together academia leaders in academia and hospitals, insurance companies and life science companies and working on health policies that matter to the industry. So he was very effective and he helped the formation of bio and mass bio. This was his passion. He lived and breathed this, so it was exciting.

Taren: You were such an integral part of it because nobody does what he did alone. So let's just face it, right? Obviously you were a tremendous partner to him in his pursuits. I'd like to talk to you a little more about the Termeer Foundation in terms of how you select those fellows. What are those characteristics you look for when you're selecting? I saw this year's slate is out. So what are the things that set somebody apart to earn such a distinguished fellowship?

Belinda: This year we had so many apply which was very exciting to see we're getting more visible and well-known. So this year we formalized the process even more than we had in the past. So we have a scoring form and we asked the fellows to apply and there are questions that each of them are asked and they have to answer the questions appropriately. What we look for in each candidate is the idea of the company that they're trying to make successful, the innovativeness, making sure they're addressing a major unmet medical need and do we believe that this could be a transformative potential, could it be viable and sustainable. And then we also look at the individual personal evaluation of each making sure that they are passionate and they're inspirational and good communication, how they apply in their essays, and then making sure that they're socially minded and they have good operational excellence as well.

There is a scoring of outstanding, excellent, very good, we just go through each fellow that way and we have nine committee members that each one of them would go through and evaluate on the scoring form and then we would pick as all of us we had a number of meetings and then the highest ones we picked. We picked six this year. Usually we pick five in the previous years, but we did pick six this year. So we had nine advisors, many of them CEOs in biotech that Henri mentored and a few from the Netherlands as well on this committee.

Taren: That's lovely. I would imagine for these CEOs it's quite the tap on the shoulder as well to be sitting in that judging seat. That's a pretty prestigious position to be in as well. It's so great that we know how busy CEOs are but willing to do this and give their time to this great cause. So kudos to you for continuing on with the fellowship, and I'm glad to hear that it's getting more attention because we really do need to bring up that next generation of leaders to help fulfill Henri's vision of what biotech could be. So that's just lovely. I know that collaboration was also a big part of Henri's make up, and how are you collaborating with other foundations to further the mission?

Belinda: We feel like we're still at the starting line, but we do have collaborations and partnerships that we have started. Of course, the Termeer Center at Mass General is one of them. But we also an organization that were partnering with called Columbus Children's Foundation, and that's a nonprofit organization that is seeking to help accelerate access to gene therapy for children with ultra-ultra rare genetic diseases. So we are putting together a gene therapy expert council from our network and we're helping to develop a roadmap for navigating and expediting the path of these gene therapy treatments to these children with these ultra-ultra rare diseases.

Henri and I supported some work at Harvard Medical School, and I'm still very involved with that, as well as MIT – we supported a professorship at MIT as well. We have MassBio lab. We

have Termeer student scholarship award. We have a committee that chooses the student that should receive the \$2500 for this award for their college that will help them for college and then we also have one for a teacher – a life science educator grant that provides \$2500 a year to a science teacher in recognition of their mentoring of their students.

Taren: I love that.

Belinda: Yeah, it's a great program.

Taren: That's fabulous. We usually hear about it going to the students, but I love rewarding the teachers for continuing to spark that flame in students about science. That's awesome.

Belinda: We enjoy doing that. And then we also have one other partnership that we started this year's as the inaugural year of the Transatlantic Connections Award and that's between Massachusetts and the Netherlands, and it's to support innovation and cultural exchange between researchers in both Massachusetts and Holland. We award one life science entrepreneur from the Netherlands and one from Massachusetts and then we award them by providing travel to their opposite connections. The Massachusetts awardee will go to Holland and they will be mentored and shown how they can expand in Europe with the Netherlands and get mentored by life science CEOs in the Netherlands, as well as venture capital firms and so forth over there and they'll have some sort of cultural exchange possibility during that week that they are there. And then the same will happen for the young awardee that comes to Massachusetts. We have a full week of programs of visiting CEOs and VC companies and so forth and have them learn about Massachusetts and biotech in the Cambridge area as well.

Taren: That's very cool. I love that exchange program because it is – we're living in a global like community of biotech and I think that's just so fun and it's – what a great opportunity for these young people. I mean that's just amazing. That's life changing for them.

Belinda: Yeah, I think so. It's quite exciting. We were happy to announce the awardees this year. So we look forward to timing their visits in the fall.

Taren: Very cool. I will follow up with you to see how they're doing as we get closer to that time and towards the end of the year. Obviously, continuing Henri's work is a driving passion for you, but I know that you also have your own passions and that you have had some significant board roles outside of the foundation. Tell me about these roles and why they're so important to you and what it means to you to give back.

Belinda: It's just been great to give back and Henri had the same characteristic that we should always give back. So we were both very involved in nonprofits, and I was more on the arts nonprofit boards and Henri – he actually was on a couple of arts boards as well as the Museum of Science board.

I've been on many of these boards for many, many years and then after Henri's passing, I did join the Harvard Medical School board of fellows which Henri was a member of and became a

member of the Harvard Medical School Discovery Council. I've been involved at Mass General and I joined the Mass General Presidents Council as well, and I have joined a biotech board of directors, a small startup PIC Therapeutics a couple of years ago and I'm a board observer of a couple of others.

Henri helped start six companies after he left Genzyme. So I'm still very involved with those six biotechs that he helped start. I have Alan Waltz who used to work for Henri; he is still working for me on a part time basis and he is a scientist by training and he was helping Henri do the due diligence on the science of the companies and then Henri would decide to invest and so that's what I'm trained to do is invest in those companies. I'm still quite excited that they all seem to do – they're doing well and they're progressing along. So it's been a lot of fun.

Taren: That's amazing. That's such great stuff that you're doing. We're coming up on the fourth anniversary of his passing unfortunately and it must still feel like it's yesterday to you I would imagine in some ways, and yet in some ways it probably feels like it's been a long time since he's been gone. How are you still coping with all of that that you have to do in his memory and continuing on his legacy and yet still probably grieving some I would imagine?

Belinda: Yeah. Actually, it's been my therapy I think is starting the foundation. It has been just therapeutic for me. It is a lot of work; I think Henri would be so shocked to know. For the first year I don't think I did... It was just complete shock, but it was tough and it still is. Many days there are tough moments, but this keeps me going and knowing that there are so many people out there that feel they were inspired by Henri that they want to help, which is incredible to know that. That gives me the courage to move forward. But as you said, it is tough and sometimes it does feel like it was just yesterday and sometimes it does feel like it's been so long – more than the four years.

Taren: Yeah. I can't even imagine. We ask this question to all of our WoW podcasters and I'm going to ask it of you. Was there a wow moment for you in terms of managing through this or the work you're doing in his honor? Can you single out one single out one specific incident that really gives you the chills or makes you just sit up and go wow, I can't believe we're doing this or I can't believe I'm doing this?

Belinda: Actually I think I probably have two. I've just been so proud of the work I was involved in with helping in the planning and completion of Termeer Square. That wow moment was probably the day of the actual park dedication, and it was just an extremely emotional day for me because it just hit me and realized I listened to the speeches that others made about the impact that Henri had made on them and the industry. It was just so touching. So that was one moment.

And then the other was probably the accomplishment of the formation of the Termeer Foundation and its growth this past year even though it was COVID. We just kind of formalized the foundation in a formal way and we hired a new leader and a new executive director to help us lead the foundation in the coming years and we named a board of directors. So I've been engaged with the partnerships that we have made and just knowing that we're going to make a

transformation in this industry, I think it's just exciting to be involved with the foundation at this point.

Taren: Belinda, I have to tell you I can't thank you enough for being so open and so authentic with us and your journey in continuing Henri's legacy. The work you're doing is so important, and I hope you feel a tremendous amount of pride because when I listen to you I hear the passion in your voice and your commitment to continuing what he had started, and I really feel that this is all in such good hands. You're such a steward of his legacy and his vision. Thank you so much for sharing a little piece of you and a little piece of him with us.

Belinda: Thank you so much for having me, Taren. It's been a lot of fun. Thank you.

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