



People

Encouraging the next generation of female scientists

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Our stories / People

Amy Hart traces her interest in science to 5th grade when her grandfather was diagnosed with a form of leukemia.

“I was always close to my grandfather so that was an inspiration for wanting to learn more about science and what cancer was,” said Hart, a principal scientist in Drug Discovery Research at Bristol Myers Squibb.

Patty McDonnell credits growing up with a chemist mother and engineer father. “I remember making soap for a middle school science experiment with my father and a lot of attempts failed,” said McDonnell, a scientist who recently left the lab for an enterprise governance role at the company. “My father didn’t view them as failures. He offered encouragement and said something like, ‘It came out real liquidy. Let’s try again and see what happens if we adjust one of the parameters.’”

There is no one path to finding a passion for science. For many girls and women, however, that path can turn into an uphill climb. Women fill about half of all U.S. jobs, but hold just 24 percent of jobs in the so-called STEM fields of science, technology, engineering and mathematics, according to a recent Census Bureau American Community Survey.

That’s a concern for the biopharmaceutical industry, which depends on a diverse pool of STEM talent. It’s a concern for the U.S. economy, where the STEM workforce accounts for more than 50% of economic growth. It’s even a concern for the planet’s future, as nations seek to confront global scientific challenges demanding everyone’s abilities, from the next coronavirus to climate change.

“STEM is where the future is heading. It’s important we cultivate and encourage more women and girls to enter STEM careers, and support them all the way from the lab to the leadership team,” said McDonnell, who helps lead a STEM Council that guides the company’s outreach initiatives. “It’s in their interest and it’s in society’s interest.”

From classroom to career



A family member’s illness inspired Amy Hart, principal scientist, Discovery Chemistry, to pursue a science career.

The first challenge is getting more girls to consider STEM careers. For years, programs like “Tomorrow’s Innovators Science Saturdays,” a partnership of Bristol Myers Squibb and the 4H youth development organization in New Jersey, has been planting those seeds by bringing young learners together with employees for hands-on science experiments. This effort recently earned Bristol Myers Squibb an Educator of the Year Award from the New Jersey Association of 4H Agents.

Helping teachers discover new ways to bring science to life is another area of focus. The Bristol Myers Squibb Centers for Teaching and Learning at Rider University in Lawrenceville, N.J., and

Montclair State University in Montclair, N.J., work with local school districts and private schools to improve how K-12 educators teach science and math.

After high school the focus turns to mentoring and recruiting. Emily Cunningham was a University of Pennsylvania student two years ago when she accepted an invitation to attend a Bristol Myers Squibb Women in Chemical Engineering outreach event for students pursuing scientific careers. Inspired by the people she met, she stayed in touch with the company and in 2019 joined as an associate research scientist.

“The event introduced me to many excellent role models for young female engineers and I feel very lucky to now be working with them,” said Cunningham.

The next challenge is retention. Female STEM professionals can still face an uphill climb, from a lack of women mentors and leaders, to societal issues such as unequal burden-sharing in the household – all cited as factors that contribute to women in STEM leaving careers at a higher rate than their male counterparts. In response, companies and organizations are doing more and more to help fix this “leaky pipeline” phenomenon through policies and practices aimed at developing, retaining and advancing women.

Through a partnership with Columbia University Graduate School of Business, Bristol Myers Squibb offers LEAD (Lead. Engage. Accelerate. Develop.), a leadership development program for women and multicultural employees who demonstrate strong leadership potential. In addition, B-NOW (Bristol Myers Squibb Network of Women) People and Business Resource group, works to ensure women have equal opportunities to be recruited, developed, advanced and retained globally. B-NOW offers programming specifically for women, such as career advancement workshops, and also engages men to be full partners in gender equity.

More broadly, the company cultivates and supports female employees and executives through targeted development, coaching, mentoring and sponsorship programs. Another company-wide initiative is Possibility Lives, which uses behavior science to help employees form habits that improve work relationships and create a more inclusive culture.

Recent progress

Signs of progress are clear. The biopharmaceutical and broader life-sciences industry have made steady gains in the representation of women. From 1990 to 2016, the share of women in the industry increased from 34 to 47 percent, according to the Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturers Association (PhRMA).

For Bristol Myers Squibb, such progress underscores a fundamental outlook: having a diverse, inclusive workforce is a competitive advantage.

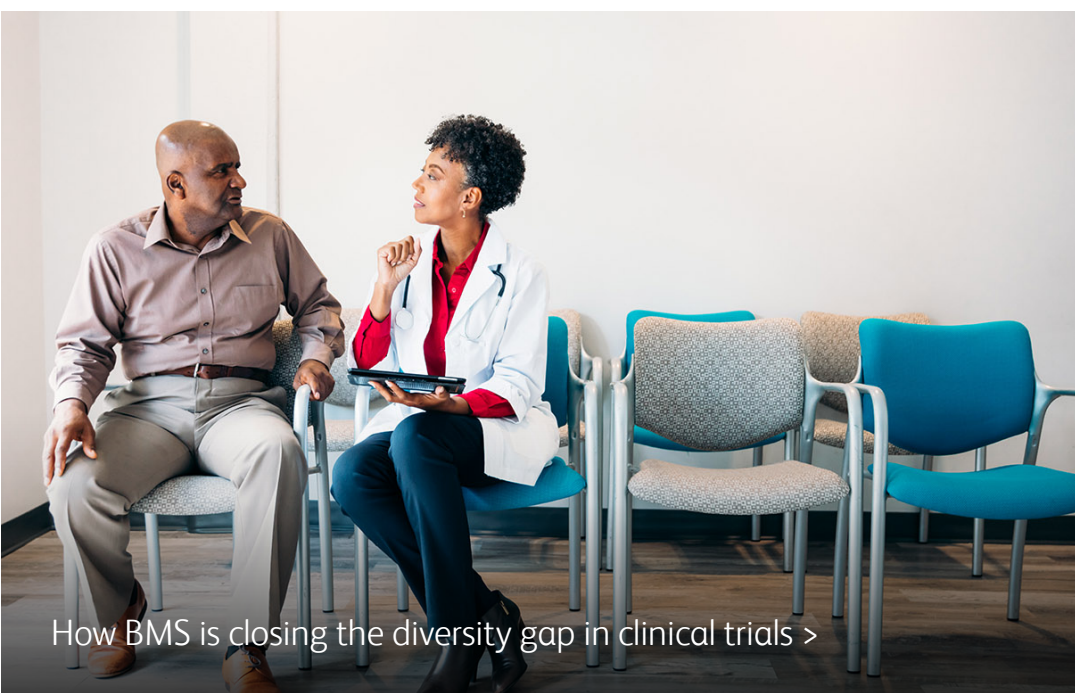
“As we think about discovering and developing the next generation of medicines for patients around the world, it’s so important to have a workforce that’s diverse and inclusive,” said McDonnell. “Having people with different perspectives, backgrounds and experiences leads to different ideas, speeds innovation, and ultimately helps produce the best solutions for the patients we serve.”

[Learn more](#) about Bristol Myers Squibb’s commitment to diversity and inclusion, including the People and Business Resource Groups (PBRGs).

About Bristol Myers Squibb

Bristol Myers Squibb is a global biopharmaceutical company whose mission is to discover, develop and deliver innovative medicines that help patients prevail over serious diseases. As global citizens, we work sustainably and responsibly to create a positive impact in the communities where we live and work.

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Home	Our medicines	Our stories
Patients & caregivers	Legal notice	Contact us
Healthcare providers	Privacy notice	Worldwide locations
Researchers	Your privacy choices	© 2024 Bristol-Myers Squibb Company
Investors	Trademarks	
News	Forward-looking statement	
About us	UK-CA slavery and human trafficking statement (PDF)	