



Optimum
Strategic Communications

INTERNATIONAL DAY OF WOMEN & GIRLS IN SCIENCE 2024



WHO IS AN INSPIRATIONAL FEMALE ROLE MODEL
IN LIFE SCIENCES AND WHY?

[Click](#) to discover who the **#WomenInHealthcare** have nominated!



Happy International Day of Women and Girls in Science 2024

For this year's International Day of Women and Girls in Science, Optimum is celebrating the amazing women we work with by asking them to nominate a fellow female working in life sciences who inspires them in their lives and careers.

We asked:

Who is an inspirational female role model in life sciences and why?

Who would you vote for?

We've had a huge variety of women nominated, which speaks to the undeniable talent that women in life sciences have to offer and the awe inspiring contribution they continue to make to the sector, both past and present.



Mary Clark
Optimum

Katalin Karikó

Hungarian-American Biochemist
& Nobel Prize winner 2023

Katalin Karikó endured many knockbacks and attacks throughout her career but her enduring passion, perseverance and resilience for science led to the mRNA vaccines that saved millions of lives, and the co-award of the 2023 Noble Prize for Medicine. A truly inspirational woman against all odds! Thank you Kati for not giving up!



Ena Prosser
Fountain Healthcare

Dr. Kiran Mazumdar Shaw

Founder & Chairwoman of
Biocon India

Kiran has grown a truly global biotech company from India. She has aimed high to innovate with new drugs and technologies as well the service side of her businesses. Biocon is recognised as a partner to many traditional pharma companies. Equally, her own foundation and personal charitable works match her leadership for the sciences (and especially biosciences) in India.



Katya Smirnyagina
Oxford Science Enterprise

Prof Dame Carol Robinson

Oxford's first female Professor of
Chemistry

We are lucky to work here in Oxford with incredible academics and the bio of Prof Dame Carol Robinson is fabulous. She is the Director of the Kavli Institute and Oxford's first female Professor of Chemistry. Recipient of many awards, Carol is also the co-founder of our portfolio company Omass Therapeutics!



Renée Aguiar-Lucander
Calliditas Therapeutics

Dame Emma Walmsley

CEO of GSK

Dame Emma Walmsley DBE is the first female CEO of a big pharma company. She had no scientific background but strong management experience and has driven change.



Zoë Johnson
M:M Bio

Dr. Amanda Proudfoot
(1949-2019), Biochemist &
Chemokine Biologist

Internationally recognised for her seminal contributions to the field of chemokine biology, Amanda taught me how to be brave, curious, warm and strong. She was the life and soul of every event, garnered huge respect from her peers for her work, and acted with grace in the face of adversity. A true champion of young scientists, she has helped launch many successful careers.



Camilla Petrycer Hansen
Novo Holdings

Dr. Rita Balice-Gordon
CEO of Muna Therapeutics

I would highlight Rita Balice-Gordon who has done an outstanding job as CEO of Muna Therapeutics!

Rita has an impressive history leading programs in small molecules, biologics and gene therapy at Sanofi, and psychiatry and pain programs at Pfizer. She is also a former Professor of Neuroscience at the University of Pennsylvania School of Medicine.



Bommy Lee
Sofinnova Partners

The unsung
Everyday scientists, researchers,
innovators

The unsung, everyday scientists, researchers, and innovators whose names may not be in headlines (yet!), but whose dedication, passion, and brilliance fuel the advancements in this field. People who are driven not by a desire for recognition, but by a deep commitment to their work and its potential to make a difference in the world. These are the women who inspire me.



Eva Haas
Optimum

Professor Özlem Türeci
German physician, scientist and
entrepreneur.

Professor Özlem Türeci M.D. for her work on immunotherapy, in particular personalised immunotherapy and founding both Ganymed Pharmaceuticals (developed zolbetuximab for oesophageal and gastric cancer) and BioNTech (pioneering mRNA Covid vaccines and personalized neoantigen mRNA immunotherapies) with her husband Professor Uğur Şahin M.D.



Lucie Ellis-Tait
Citeline

Bahija Jallal

CEO & Board Director at Immunocore and a champion for diversity

A few years ago, Immunocore looked like another UK biotech destined to fail to live up to its promising science. But Bahija has been instrumental at setting the company on track for success. Speaking to Bahija a few years ago, her emphasis was on how diversity directly impacts innovation. She said at the time, "Not realising that diversity is what makes companies richer and more successful is a mistake." Bahija sits on several company boards and was previously named Woman of the Year by the Healthcare Businesswomen's Association.



Masha Strømme
EXACT Therapeutics

Dr. Liv Hatle

(1936 – 2023) Trailblazing Norwegian cardiologist

Liv was instrumental to the success of medical ultrasound for cardiac monitoring! She is an incredible role model for women in STEM - very few people know of the contribution she made to medicine. Liv did not have image guidance, but had a remarkable 3D inner vision, combining the probe position with the location on the chest, and interpretation of the received signal, to understand what she was measuring, and made very precise diagnoses.



Dr. Annalisa Jenkins
Non-Executive Director

Prof Molly Stevens

John Black Professor of Bionanoscience at Oxford University

Molly is not only a remarkably brilliant academic changing the world through her research and entrepreneurship in bio-nanoscience, she is curious, kind, gracious and fun. And she really cares about people and ensuring that they thrive and flourish under her leadership.



Ana Apezteguia
Neuraxpharm

Dr. Belén Garijo

CEO of Merck

She is curious, dynamic and has an entrepreneurial spirit, and this is key to continue evolving in science and to bring innovation to patients. Her career is an example of determination, of aspiration, of constant challenge, of trying to keep growing and learning. She is a good example that there are ways to integrate your personal life and your professional life.



Hollie Vile
Optimum

Colleagues & Clients

Investors, researchers and scientists

I can't recall having many female role models in STEM growing up. Yes, there were household names like Marie Curie and Rosalind Franklin (who only eventually received the recognition due) but certainly there was a general lack of emphasis on females compared to males. I'd have to say that I'm constantly inspired by, and look up to many of the women I work with today: my colleagues, clients - management teams, researches, investors - talented individuals making waves in the industry, brilliant minds who make enormous contributions to science today, for future generations.



Lisa Urquhart
Freelance Journalist

Jessica Federer

Board member of Sage Therapeutics, Pluto Health and Angelini Ventures

A digital trailblazer, Jessica was one of the first chief digital officers in life sciences and the first woman to hold that role at a big pharma company. But it is Jessica's work as a campaigner for women's health, and more importantly investment in women's health, that I would like to highlight. Last year she organised the first women's health investor summit at the New York Stock Exchange, bringing together investors representing over \$100bn under management. If this wasn't enough Jessica has served on the United Nations International Telecommunications Union advisory board.



Belinda Carlsen
Leucid Bio

Dr. Elizabeth Blackburn

Nobel Prize winner for the co-discovery of telomerase

I recently learned that of 145 scientists mentioned in the Australian school curriculum, only one was a woman (Rosalind Franklin), so I thought it fitting to mention an inspirational Australian scientist - Dr. Elizabeth Blackburn, who won a Nobel prize in 2009 in Physiology and Medicine for her co-discovery of telomerase. Understanding telomeres is especially important with diseases prevalent in an aging population. We're told if we eat well, exercise, reduce stress etc...that this can have a positive impact on how we age, and Dr. Blackburn has basically said 'here's the science to go with that'.



Marta Llorens
Oxolife

Prof Josefina Castellvi

Oceanographer and biologist

As a pioneering oceanographer involved in the exploration of the Antarctic, in 1989 Josefina was the first woman to run a base in Antarctica. I was young the first time I saw her on TV. Passionate and energetic, Josefina easily explained scientific questions and transmitted a commitment to science and protection of the planet. From my hometown of Barcelona, Josefina inspired myself and my mother, who observed the difficult gendered barriers of the scientific industry. She is a strong and fighting woman, who knew how to face, with great passion, the many obstacles that life put in front of her in a very difficult time and world for women.



Kiran Roest
iOnctura

Marie Curie

(1867-1934), physicist and chemist

Growing up in Poland Marie Curie wasn't allowed to go to university so she moved to Paris by herself to go to university, even though she didn't speak French. Her research on radiation earned her several novel prizes but, more importantly, her work made a tremendous difference to patients who could now be x-rayed. After the war she inspired a huge number of girls who came to study at her Parisian Institute. Her ambition, drive and position as a role model to future generations continues to be inspirational even now, nearly 100 years after her death.



Dipal Patel
Valneva

Colleagues at Valneva

from the lab to commercial team

I'm inspired every day by the women I have the pleasure of working with at Valneva. From the labs to the commercial teams and beyond, their focus, drive and professionalism are unmatched. The achievements of these women and this organisation are inspirational and on a par with much larger organisations. The women at Valneva are strong in character and are role models for the next generation of leaders in the life sciences.



Marguerite Hutchinson
STORM Therapeutics

Kathy Glaub

Escient Pharmaceuticals

Kathy has an incredibly successful track record of driving teams of scientists to success. She is a businessperson who builds engines of scientific productivity. She is curious, thoughtful, has incredible stamina, and a great sense of humour.



Hana Malik
Optimum

Teacher

My senior school biology teacher

It wasn't anything in particular or singular that she did, but I remember seeing how excited she was when speaking about specific topics or during experiments - it made going to class a lot more enjoyable. She encouraged me and made learning fun. I then began doing more background reading on topics that were curious to me and suddenly found myself wanting to learn more and more. It only made sense for me to work in this industry in the hope to make a difference and to maybe, one day, inspire other young people to get involved and excited about science.



Charlotte Hepburne-Scott
Optimum

Dame Kate Bingham DBE
Managing Partner at SV Health
Ventures

I remember hearing Kate on BBC Radio 4's Today programme soon after she was appointed Chair of the UK Vaccine Taskforce at the start of the pandemic. She was crystal clear in describing what needed to be done, very 'no nonsense' and unequivocal in her response to the journalist's confrontational question about whether or not she would succeed, explicitly putting her own neck on the line. I felt a huge confidence in this straight-talking lady and, sure enough, months later she had delivered 100% on what she set out to do.



Paula Olazabal
Ysios Capital

Eliane Schutte
CEO of Xeltis

Eliane is notable for her remarkable leadership in taking over a company and driving it towards significant growth. Under her stewardship, the company has successfully introduced new products, making significant progress in its development plans. Her management has been pivotal in the company's ability to raise new funds, ensuring its continued growth and innovation. Her strategic vision, combined with her capability to execute complex initiatives, showcases her as a powerful figure in the life sciences industry, inspiring others through her achievements and leadership qualities.



Åsa Magnusson
Vicore Pharma

Dr. Jessica Shull
Director of Digital Therapeutics
at Vicore Pharma

I'm inspired by my colleague Jessica Shull, leading our digital health initiatives. She is a true innovator, bringing us on an exciting journey by unleashing the power and value of combining digital health and drug molecules to optimize treatment potential for patients and their caregivers.



Nadiya Ishnazarova
M Ventures

Prof Dorothy Hodgkin
(1910-1994), Nobel Prize winning
chemist

Dorothy is an inspirational woman role model in life sciences. Not only was she a groundbreaking scientist, Nobel Prize winner, and a pioneer in X-ray crystallography, which led to the development of techniques to determine the three-dimensional structures of complex organic molecules, including penicillin, vitamin B12, and insulin, but she also used her influence and expertise to address issues related to the responsible use of scientific knowledge and technology for the betterment of society.



Geraldine O'Keeffe
EQT Partners

Female CEOs
All

I can't single out one but I'm particularly impressed by female CEOs because they have to negotiate with each of the male-dominated stakeholders of the industry - a careful balancing act.



Kristen Sheppard
Centessa

Patients
Patients and their families.

Although I have worked with many excellent professional women, I have met the most inspirational women role models in life science through patient events. These women, who are patients or mothers of patients, have the most awe-inspiring determination. They inspire me with their courage, their grit and their relentless pursuit of a cure. As women, we share each other's journeys, battles and victories. I love being part of an industry and community where we can have an impact.



Valerie Vanhooren
ONA Therapeutics

Dr. Pamela Klein
Member of the Board of Directors at ONA Therapeutics

As a medical oncologist, Dr Klein's relentless work aided the development of a portfolio of life-saving cancer therapies, including multiple drugs recognised by the WHO as essential medicines. She has contributed to the development of novel antibody-based treatments for cancer patients from multiple angles: treating patients as a medical oncologist, performing groundbreaking research and defining the strategy of multiple biotech companies as expert board member. Her focus and determination to improve the lives of cancer patients worldwide, and impact as a mentor, is an inspiration to many.



Varen Outhonesack
Optimum

Dr. Sally Ride
American woman who shattered the Space ceiling

In 1983, Sally Ride broke gender barriers when she became the first American woman in space - one day after I was born. Growing up in California, where Ride is from, I grew up watching how profound her impact on the world was, especially her lifelong advocacy for girls and women in STEM. Through her courage and determination, and her nonprofit Sally Ride Science, she helped open up previously closed doors in the field. Today, the organisation continues Ride's work advocating for equality and inclusion in STEM, ensuring her legacy lives on.



Anne Lane
UCL Business

Dr. Barbara McClintock
(1902-1992), Nobel Prize winning
scientist and cytogeneticist

On achieving her PhD in botany from Cornell University, Barbara dedicated her lifelong research to the study of chromosomes and their changes throughout the process of reproduction in maize. This allowed her to produce the first genetic map for maize, paving the way for lifechanging research into human chromosomes.

Ahead of her time, Barbara eventually won the Nobel Prize for gene transposition, but really had to be single-minded and confident that she was right.



Eleanor Cooper
Optimum

**Elizabeth Garrett
Anderson**

The First English female doctor

Elizabeth Garrett Anderson was the first female doctor in Britain.

Despite the systemic prejudice that refused her the opportunity to study medicine, Elizabeth persevered and qualified as a doctor in 1865, taking numerous steps to do so. After qualifying, she went on to open a school of medicine for women in 1874, and two years later an act was passed permitting women to enter the medical profession. Her ambition and resilience is truly inspirational and has paved the way for women's medical education in Britain today.



Claire Noyce
Hybridan

Prof Dame Sue Black DBE
Anatomist and humanitarian

Sue is an anatomist and academic who spent a decade working for the UK's Foreign Office and the UN on the identification of victims and perpetrators of various conflicts.

In 1999 her inspiring humanitarian work saw her as the lead forensic anthropologist to the British Forensic Team in Kosovo and in 2003 she undertook tours to Iraq. In 2005 Sue participated in the Thai Tsunami Victim Identification operation as an innovator in developing techniques to confirm someone's identity based on photographs of their hands or arms.



Marie-Louise Jersin
Novo Holdings

**Dr. Camilla Petrycer
Hansen**

Principal, Novo Holdings

Understanding the science and possessing the skill to comprehend various market dynamics are crucial success factors in our sector, both of which Camilla exemplifies admirably. Her deep commitment to advancing improved treatments for patients shines through in her investment portfolio of companies, a number of which are focused on combating the global issue of antimicrobial resistance. To sum up, Camilla embodies the values of Performance, Respect, and Responsibility held by Novo Holdings and acts as an exceptional role model for her colleagues and investment peers.



Maite Malet
Asabys

Dr. Clara Campàs
Managing Partner and
Co-founder of Asabys

A scientist by training, in 2018 Clara co-founded Asabys Partners - one of the leading venture capital firms in Southern Europe, where she led the investment, support and constant provision of advice to successful companies such as Agomab Therapeutics and Sidekick Health. Her constant commitment to solving the most pressing issues in the healthcare industry, her passion for the discovery of new technologies and the development of novel solutions to improve care, and her entrepreneurial spirit, position Clara as one of the leading women in life sciences today.



Melanie Lee
ThinkIO

Dr. Karen Skinner
Chief Project & Portfolio Officer
at LifeArc

Karen can make the impossible happen and did so at LifeArc when she initially came in to lead the Project Management team and help with other relationships between LifeArc and major collaborators (such as the CRICK Institute). As she developed in that role, Karen took on the major challenge of making our strategic intentions come true and she led the initiation of LifeArc's £100m investments through forming our Translational Challenges focused on specific underserved patient groups. Karen will tackle really difficult problems and she puts all of herself in alongside those she works with.



Gloria Gonzalez-Aseguinolaza
Vivet Therapeutics

Dr. Margarita Salas
(1938 - 2019), biochemist,
medical researcher and author

Numerous women have served as inspirational role models in life sciences, among them the renowned Spanish scientist, Dr Margarita Salas. Her legacy is defined by groundbreaking contributions to molecular biology, a pioneering spirit in a male-dominated field, and lasting impacts on scientific research and education. Dr Salas, highly respected by professional colleagues and Spanish society, was a trailblazer whose example influenced my initial steps in science. These were taken at the Research Center for Biological Research in Madrid, now named in her honour and where she began her illustrious career.



Kathleen Masch-Wiest
4SC

Dr. Susanne Danhauser-Riedl
Chief Medical Officer at 4SC

Susanne has more than 30 years of experience in leadership positions. Starting as a physician, Susanne has dedicated her entire career to improving the lives of patients with cancer through the clinical development of novel drugs. As such she made a major contribution to medical science and to improving the quality of patients' lives. This is particularly noteworthy because at the beginning of her career, as a wife and mother, work-life balance and flexible working models were not considered important issues. In her role, Susanne was and is a mentor for women in medical science.



Anne Osdoit
Sofinnova Partners

Cécile Dupont & Marion Gasperment
Sofinnova Partners

My inspirational women role models in life sciences are my two dear colleagues at Sofinnova MD Start Strategy - Cécile Dupont and Marion Gasperment. Why? Because there is no such thing as an established woman role model in medtech. Seeing them, day after day, build what this might be and epitomize innovation and humanity, dedication, hard work and fun, is a constant inspiration!



Victoria Stewart
Verona Pharma

Alice Ball
(1892-1916), American pioneer of leprosy treatment

An outstanding chemist who developed the first useful treatment for Hansen's disease (leprosy) in her early 20s. Alice was also the first woman and African American to graduate with a M.S. degree in Chemistry from the University of Hawaii and later, the university's first female and African American chemistry professor.



Carolina Aguilar
INBRAIN Neuroelectronics

Helene Huby
Founder & CEO at The Exploration Company

From history I'm stuck with Marie Curie, as she will always remain the first woman in history to receive a Nobel Prize. Everybody should also read the letters between Einstein and Marie at that time, as Einstein would always support her and cheer for her to keep trailblazing! In modern times I really admire Helene Huby, Founder & CEO at The Exploration Company. Coming from several generations of explorers she has the courage to found Europe's most promising space exploration startups to democratise space exploration, making it affordable, sustainable and open. She is unstoppable and a real inspiration.



Elena Bates
Optimum

Emmanuelle Charpentier & Jennifer Doudna
Nobel prize winning molecular biologists

Nobel Prize winners in 2020, Emmanuelle Charpentier and Jennifer Doudna have revolutionised molecular biology through their discovery of the CRISPR system - transforming science and research, and unlocking new therapies.



Silvia Frutos
Splice Bio

Childhood teacher
Science

I got into life science because as a child, an inspiring teacher told me: "There is always an explanation for everything." I wanted to know the cause of everything and I had a lot of curiosity. Later, I discovered that the human body is a perfect machine and I wanted to know the mechanisms of this amazing machine.



Melissa Gallagher
Capital Group

Susan Galbraith
Senior VP at AstraZeneca

Susan's passion and knowledge has led to the delivery of life saving medicines to patients. Susan always has detailed knowledge of not only AstraZeneca's research programmes but how those programmes are positioned within a very dynamic and competitive field and how the AstraZeneca value proposition to patients will be differentiated. She is extremely diligent, has a clear passion for her work and is a great communicator, well able to bridge the gap between R&D and the capital markets. Susan exemplifies how women in life sciences can leverage their skills and abilities to make an impactful difference to patients and society.



Katie Flint
Optimum

Emmanuelle Charpentier
Nobel prize winning chemist
specialising in gene therapy

Emmanuelle Charpentier was awarded the Nobel Prize in Chemistry alongside Jennifer Doudna in 2020 for their groundbreaking work in genome editing through CRISPR.

At the time, I was still at university studying biochemistry, and witnessing women like Charpentier break barriers in the field was truly inspiring. Her dedication to advancing CRISPR technology not only highlights the transformative impact of women in scientific innovation but also continues to inspire me as I embark on the early stages of my career in the industry.



Trine Bartholdy
BII

Dr. Mirela Delibegovic
FRSE, Director, Aberdeen
University Cardiovascular and
Diabetes Centre

Dr Delibegovic is a true and thoughtful leader who clearly walks the talk when it comes to creating great scientific results through creating a happy team.

Furthermore, she is highly inspirational in terms of her entrepreneurial mindset and she has been involved in various spin out activities to ultimately benefit the health of people. You cannot be around her without feeling inspired.



Anne Douar
Vivet Therapeutics

Dr. Françoise Barré-Sinoussi
Virologist and Nobel prize laureate in 2009 for HIV discovery

Speaking of one inspirational woman in life sciences is unfairly keeping in the shadow hundreds of fantastic, very clever, brilliant and resilient women who dedicated their talent to their passions and convictions, most of the time without getting the light and rewards they were entitled to. A great figure in the world of life sciences is Dr. Françoise Barré-Sinoussi, not only for her remarkable scientific career and her commitment toward patients living with AIDS but also her tenacity at a time when women in science were facing a lot of prejudices questioning their capacity to accomplish anything in science!



Karolina Zapadka
Parkwalk Advisors

Dr. Rosalind Franklin
(1920 - 1958) British chemist and X-ray crystallographer

As an alumna of Newnham College in Cambridge, where I also had the privilege of being a student, I feel a special connection to Franklin's legacy. Rosalind Franklin's groundbreaking work in X-ray crystallography significantly contributed to our understanding of the structure of DNA. Despite facing challenges and not receiving the recognition she deserved during her lifetime, Franklin's dedication to scientific discovery continues to inspire generations of scientists. Her legacy serves as a powerful reminder of the importance of resilience, curiosity, and a relentless pursuit of knowledge in the field of life sciences.



Zahra Jawad
Creasallis

Dr. Cori Gorman
Senior Director, CMC & Regulatory Affairs at Biopharma Excellence

Cori is an absolute fountain of knowledge when it comes to developing drugs and taking them to the very end. In addition to that, she never feels that she knows it all, and is always learning and passing that information on to others. Cori is an awesome supporter of women, generous with her time and thoughts, she says it how it is! But it's her belief in the scientific community and the need to put our brains together to help others that makes her someone to aspire to be like!



Carolyn Cross
Ondine BioPharma

Dr. Tayyaba Hasan
Prof of Dermatology & Prof Healthcare Sciences & Tech, at Medical School & Harvard-MIT

Dr Hasan is a truly inspirational woman of STEM. Her work yielded significant outcomes for millions of patients around the world and her numerous PhD students are now at leading research facilities carrying on this work in oncology, chronic diseases and infection control, both in diagnosis and therapeutics. Dr Hasan has put Photomedicine on the global stage and her legacy mentoring the next generation of talent ensures that her career contributions will be leveraged for decades to come. She is an extraordinary scientist, a mentor to many, and my personal role model.



Sarah Elton-Farr
UBS

Renée Aguiar-Lucander
CEO of Calliditas Therapeutics

I admire the way in which Renée has pivoted from a background in banking to venture capital to leadership in the life sciences and has drawn on that experience to execute a highly successful launch for Tarpeyo. Importantly, under her leadership Calliditas has brought to market the first therapy for patients with IgA nephropathy, helping to reduce the loss of kidney function that can lead to dialysis or transplant.



Daniela Begolo
EQT Partners

Catherine Pickering
CEO of iOnctura

Catherine is a great leader, respected and loved by her team. Before founding and building iOnctura, she led the global oncology and immuno-oncology licensing and business development function at Merck. She is a fantastic mentor supporting the growth of up-and-coming professionals in a balanced way, even when it is detrimental to herself! She does all this with a great sense of irony, thoughtfulness, ambition and an absence of self-grandeur.



Cinney Zhang
AXA Investment Managers

Dr. Suzanne Topalian
Professor & Associate Director of
Bloomberg-Kimmel Institute for
Cancer Immunotherapy

Dr Topalian has won an extensive list of honours for her outstanding research achievements in cancer immunotherapy. Her work has opened new avenues of scientific investigation and established immunotherapy as a pillar of oncology. But what makes Dr Topalian extra special is her humbleness, approachability and down-to-earth personality. A conversation with her is confidence boosting and thought provoking. She's someone that I'm inspired to become - a warm role model and mentor to future generations of young and intelligent women, motivating them to dream big, go far and go high.



Victoria Darbyshire
J.P. Morgan

Prof Baroness Susan Greenfield
Scientist, writer, broadcaster &
member of the House of Lords

More than 25 years ago whilst still at school I attended a Women in Science event at which Baroness Greenfield was on the panel. I was fortunate enough to be picked to ask her a question and her support of girls and women to pursue a scientific degree and career really resonated with me. Since then, I have followed her from afar and admire her pioneering work in neuroscience.



Bonnie van Wilgenburg
Monograph

My Biology Teacher
Mrs Leersum

I'd like to honour all (female) life science teachers who empower the next generation of (female) scientists. Teaching us to be curious; the serendipity mindset.



Rosa Torres
Oxolife

My First Manager
Pharmaceutical industry

From the beginning she showed me how exciting and challenging drug development can be. She was able to bring out the best in us, always with kind words, closeness, trust and recognition. I was also inspired by her achievements with brilliant research in the development of new cancer therapies, then as a General Manager in a biotech start-up, and in the pharmaceutical industry to finally found a private capital company specialising in life sciences. Her dedication to empowering life science in the country she loved (Catalonia) demonstrated to me the broader impact that a pharmacist devoted to innovation can have.



Zoe Bolt
Optimum

Colleagues & Clients
Scientists and leaders

I am inspired by the fantastic scientific network of females who I surround myself with everyday who are inspirational and who take the time to encourage people to be the best that they can. They provide reassurance and always push people to rise to new opportunities, accept new challenges and never be afraid to try something new – always stay true to yourself and always be a role model to give women the power to be braver and to push forward more.



Bitu Sehat
Trill Impact

Mina Bisell
Biologist specialising in breast cancer

Prior to our first meeting, I knew about her pioneering work in cancer research and that she had been suggested as a possible candidate for the Nobel prize. The reason she stands out however is because that was the first time I was admitting to myself that representation matters. She was originally from Iran, a dancer and a prominent cancer researcher. All the things I was minus the prominent. So when she shared her story and the adversities she had faced it resonated with me deeply. Her advice has empowered me to try new things, be open to feedback and to not compromise my values. It has changed the trajectory of my career.



Vici Rabbetts
Optimum

Dr. Charlotte Beresford
Son's carer

My son's carer Dr. Charlotte Beresford taught herself A level physics so she could study medicine and worked with us between her BSc and Medical degree so she had experience of signing and SEND children before embarking on her career as an anesthesiologist.

She taught me to educate myself if I didn't know the answer and to not take no for an answer if I was following my own instincts.



Ellie Reston
Optimum

The women behind the scenes

I would like to highlight all the brilliant brains of the women working tirelessly behind the scenes making advances in science, improving the lives of patients around the world.

This has inspired me to work within life science communications to showcase the lifechanging work of these unseen women.



Aoife Minihan
Optimum

Tu YouYou
Malariologist and pharmaceutical chemist

Tu YouYou is a truly inspirational woman in life sciences, having discovered artemisinin, a groundbreaking malaria treatment that earned her the Nobel Prize for medicine in 2015.

Her commitment to finding a treatment for an illness affecting millions worldwide displays her humanitarian commitment. Tu YouYou's work not only saved countless lives but also showed the significant impact that scientific research can have on global health.

 **Optimum**
PERSPECTIVES
THE HOTTEST TOPICS IN
LIFE SCIENCES



Listen now to Optimum's Women & Girls in Science Day podcast special:

Breaking barriers and "channeling your inner cavewoman"

Chaired by:
Lisa Urquhart
International Journalist

Joined by:
Renee Aguiar-Lucander
Calliditas Therapeutics
Lene Gerlach
EIR Ventures & WiLD Network
Bitu Sehat
Trill Impact
Ninna Struck Rossen
Metsystem