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International Women's Day: Medtech's Women Movers & Shakers

by Catherine Longworth

To mark International Women's Day, *Medtech Insight* highlights five female figures making a difference in medtech – from entrepreneurs, regulatory experts and policymakers.

International Women's Day – March 8 – is a globally recognized event that celebrates women's achievements alongside fighting for gender equality. The theme this year is #PressForProgress, highlighting the monumental work that still needs to be done to achieve true gender parity.

Gender inequality continues to be a huge issue in medtech, with the number of women employed across the industry remaining low compared to men. The average figure of women employees in the medtech sector stands at 9%, with a 2015 survey by US medical device industry association AdvaMed showing that only 17% of women hold senior management roles. Across the top 19 medtech firms, only a third of MDs and CEOs were female, and of that, 57% worked in academia.

AdvaMed's Women's Executive Network (WEN) initiative aims to promote and cultivate female executive leadership across the medical device industry to ensure that innovation and development has a balanced representation.

The industry has a long way to go in recognizing the significant population of women leaders in medtech, but here are just five notable women – a mere drop in the ocean – who have been making, and continue to make, their mark in this sector.

Michelle McMurry-Heath

WW VP for Regulatory and Clinical Affairs, Johnson & Johnson Medical Device Companies

A physician and scientist, McMurry-Heath was the first African-American woman to graduate from Duke University's MD/PhD program. She's also the founding director of the Aspen Institute's Health, Medicine and Society Program, which brings industry leaders together to explore how health-care policies impact people across the US. In her role at J&J, McMurry-Heath is responsible for ensuring the company's devices perform well, and offer benefits to patients to ensure the public has trust and confidence in its technology and innovations.

McMurry-Heath says she is keen to mentor the next generation of women leaders, emphasizing how mentoring helps women picture themselves in roles and envision how their careers could be. She is part of the MAKERS program, which partners with organizations to recognize women leaders for their exceptional accomplishments, including their support and mentorship of fellow female professionals.

Tamara Syrek Jensen

Director, Coverage and Analysis Group, US Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS)

Syrek Jensen is the director of the Coverage and Analysis Group (CAG), which develops, interprets, communicates and updates evidence-based national coverage policies in the US. These policies help provide access to services and technologies that improve health outcomes for Medicare beneficiaries. Tamara is one of the primary architects in creating and implementing coverage with evidence development (CED), an initiative that allows for Medicare coverage while developing evidence through clinical trials and registries. Under the CED model, CMS is collaborating with the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ) on research topics such as molecular diagnostics, carotid stenting and Alzheimer's disease.

As director, she leads the CMS collaboration with US FDA, including the 2010 memorandum of understanding with the agency and the ongoing joint CMS-FDA parallel review pilot program. She has also completed several regulations, including updating and creating the screening and preventive benefits within the prescribed statutory or regulatory timeframes.

Janet Trunzo

Senior Advisor to the President and Senior Executive VP, Technology & Regulatory Affairs, AdvaMed.

Trunzo leads a team of regulatory experts at AdvaMed, and during her tenure has focused on the

passage of the Medical Device User Fee and Modernization Act of 2002 (MDUFMA), its reauthorization in 2007 and in 2012, and the subsequent negotiation for MDUFA IV. She has represented the US device industry on the Global Harmonization Task Force. Currently she chairs the international Board of Trustees for the Global Medical Device Nomenclature Agency and chairs the Regulatory Committee for the Global Medical Technology Alliance. A seasoned industry expert, prior to joining AdvaMed, Trunzo held positions at Hybritech Inc., a medical device and diagnostics manufacturer, and Scripps Clinic and Research Foundation, a hospital, diagnostic clinic and research institute.

Angela MacFarlane

Managing Member and CEO of ForSight Labs

In 2017, MacFarlane, head of medical device incubator ForSight Labs, was named recipient of the Ferolyn Powell Leadership Award at the Medtech Women's MedtechVision annual conference. The award recognizes a leader who "embodies persistence, passion, dedication to innovation and patients, and commitment to mentoring others in the medical technology sector."

Ferolyn Powell was recognized with the first award posthumously, which was named in her honor after she died in a motorbike accident in 2015 at 53. One of the companies Powell led was Evalve Inc., where she oversaw the development of the *MitraClip*, a catheter-based device for treating mitral valve regurgitation without invasive open-heart surgery. The Menlo Park, Calif., company raised more than \$100m before being acquired by Abbott in 2009. Powell was known for her mentorship of other young female entrepreneurs.

Standing Up For Women's Health Rights

The current US administration is proving to be a threat to women's access to birth control devices and contraceptive services. Under President Trump's proposed alternative to the Affordable Care Act (ObamaCare), health-care plans will not include comprehensive coverage or free preventative care, such as birth control, or maternity, prescription drugs and mental-health benefits.

US Sens. Patty Murray, D-Wash., ranking member of the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee, and Ron Wyden, D-Ore., ranking member on the Senate Finance Committee (which has jurisdiction over Medicare and Medicaid matters at CMS), are two key members aiming to push against the proposals.

Both senate leaders have been vocally opposed to the Trump administration policies that they say would deprive low-income women from access to Planned Parenthood clinics for gynecological examinations and birth control devices via denied

MacFarlane is an expert in early-stage company development, and over the past 12 years, ForSight has incubated six vision technology companies, including Transcend Medical Inc. (acquired by Alcon), ForSight Newco II (acquired by QLT), NexisVision (out-licensed), ForSight VISION4 (acquired by Roche), ForSight VISION5 (acquired by Allergan) and ForSight VISION6 (private). Prior to leading ForSight Labs, MacFarlane served as chief technology counsel to The Foundry, a medical device incubator, and held senior management team roles at several medical technology start-up companies.

Leslie Trigg

CEO, Outset Medical

Trigg joins this list out of many notable medtech women due to her track record of successful trade-sale exits. She joined dialysis machine-developer Outset Medical in 2013 after leading a number of acquisitions. Prior to Outset, she was executive VP at Lutonix, a cardiovascular medical device company acquired by CR Bard for \$325m. She also served as chief business officer of AccessClosure, a vascular closure company acquired by Cardinal Health. Before AccessClosure she was VP of marketing for FoxHollow Technologies, helping to architect the strategy and commercial infrastructure that led to a successful IPO and subsequent acquisition by ev3/Covidien.

Trigg's management experience includes senior leadership positions at Cytoc Corp. and breast cancer diagnostics company Pro-Duct Health Inc., which was acquired by Cytoc. She is currently a board member of Cardiovascular Systems Inc. Her next mission is to drive commercialization of the company's cloud-based self-service portable dialysis machine *Tablo* to the US market.

[Editor's note: For more insight into female leaders in the biopharma industry and how they overcome gender barriers in the sector, read [Scrip Asks... What Are The Biggest Barriers To Women In](#)

reimbursements under Medicaid.

In a Feb. 14 letter sent to Health and Human Services (HHS) Secretary Alex Azar, Murray and Wyden urged the Trump administration to reverse its decision to roll back protections that prevent states from excluding qualified women's health-care providers from the Medicaid program.

"This most recent decision is another step in [the administration's] ideological and discriminatory agenda, as it encourages states to block Planned Parenthood and other essential providers from participating in state Medicaid programs," the senators wrote.

"Continuing this agenda of discrimination by promoting the state-by-state repeal of the free choice of provider provision, and defunding of qualified family planning providers like Planned Parenthood is unacceptable, unlawful, and threatens the lives and rights of millions of women across the country."

[Leadership Roles?](#) *from Medtech Insight's sister publication Scrip.]*