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# As A Young Woman Marissa Fayer ‘Fell’ Into Medtech. Now, As An Industry Leader, She’s Focused On Leveling The Field

by [Brian Bossetta](#)

Marissa Fayer is dedicated to advancing women’s health. The founder and CEO of HERhealthEQ, a global nonprofit focused on women’s health equity in emerging and developing countries, Fayer is also the CEO of DeepLook Medical. As part of our focus on women’s health in honor of Women’s History Month, Fayer spoke to *Medtech Insight* about the importance of having more women in all sectors of medtech, both for the benefit of industry as well as women patients.

*Friday, March 8 was International Women’s Day. To celebrate the day and Women’s History Month, Medtech Insight is speaking with [female leaders](#) in medtech, regulatory and health care delivery about their experiences as women, women-specific industry challenges, including research and innovation needs, and how women in leadership roles today are inspiring and empowering rising generations.*

**Q** What led to your career in medtech, and especially your focus on women's health?

**A** I fell into it. I was recruited from university into medtech, not really knowing what it was. I originally planned to work in the aerospace industry. Thank goodness medtech found me. Related to women in medtech, as a woman in the field, and as an engineer who always supported STEM programs for younger girls, I also had an affinity for supporting women in the industry. Women have a unique perspective, and as the

minority in medtech, we bring important insight to the field.

**Q** Since you started working in medtech, have you noticed more, or less, women in the field?

**A** Definitely more, and I've also noticed that the women currently in medtech are louder and prouder than before about the work we are all doing in the industry.

**Q** Are there any unique challenges or obstacles that women face, or perhaps that you have faced, in pursuing a career in medtech? And if so, do you see them changing?

**A** Like most other industries, medtech is still a male-dominated space. As a woman, it will always be harder to achieve equality, equity, and the respect of most in the industry. We have to work five times harder, prove ourselves ten times more, and take the inequities in the industry just to be seen as equals. It's not at all fair or just, but now that there are many more women, my hope, and I know the hope for most of my women colleagues, is that we make it easier for the women entering the industry today. I have always challenged the status quo, and will continue to do so, until there is parity. Women are 51% of the population, we should be 51% of the workforce and at least 51% of the leadership positions, not just in medtech, but all other industries.

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**Q Why is it important that more women are represented in medtech? How does more women medtech CEOs, leaders, designers — as well as physicians — impact women directly in terms of their health?**

**A** Having women at all levels of business, especially in medtech, is important for representation of what matters to women, how we expect to be treated, how tech and products affect us as women, and that women are communicating and designing for women. We often, including myself, focus on women in the engineering and development space. But we also need to ensure there are women at all levels of business, from the financials to marketing to advocacy to investor relations. Every study shows that companies with higher equality levels have better performance in all areas, so it should be a business imperative to have more women in medtech.

**Q How does having more women in medtech impact women as patients?**

**A** As a patient, I want to know that women were part of the design process for a product, whether digital or physical, that I need to use. Having women as part of the industry ensures women have better health outcomes because there are products developed and designed for them, and that doesn't just mean it's pink. It means that an IUD is made for the anatomy of our body, that an orthopedic surgeon has equipment made for her hand size, and that a pulse oximeter was designed for all colors of the skin.

**Q Are there any programs or initiatives you are aware of to get more women to think about careers in medtech? How can more women be encouraged to go into medtech?**

**A** There is a lot of outreach from all types of medtech companies into the university system, where our best source of talent is. But it's also the responsibility of all of us already in the industry to educate others. I didn't know what medtech was when I started; now I can't stop talking about it. Medtech affects our everyday health. If girls and women knew more about it, many of them would want to be part of it. There are also professional societies such as AdvaMed, Society of Women Engineers, BioMed, MassMedic, and others, many of which have outreach and educational programs

about the industry. And remember, you don't need to be an engineer. You can be a lawyer, an accountant, work in marketing, human resources, manufacturing, logistics, customer service. We need everyone as part of medtech.

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**Q Do you see a role for government in promoting women's health?**

**A** The government has a huge role to play in women's health. The White House Women's Health initiative led by Dr. Jill Biden is a huge step and has already been making an impact with funding announcements and many more to come. I'm honored to be a part of it. Now there is much more focus on other groups in women's health related to dense breast screening, fertility access, abortion access, maternal health, equity in clinical trials, research for areas affecting women and their health. We are a small but growing community and many of us are proud to use our voices to speak up and to bring attention to these issues. We are making progress, but there is so much more work to be done, and federal legislation, regardless of politics, is required to ensure women's health is a priority.

**Q I know breast cancer is a major focus for you, especially the issue of breast density. How important is it for women to not only have regular breast cancer screenings, but to know whether they have density and how that impacts their breast health?**

**A** It is a health imperative to have annual screenings, beginning at 40 years old, or earlier if there is family history or suspicious masses. Ensuring women and their doctors have as much information as possible for their breast health, including their breast density, is critical. In fact, 71% of all breast cancers occur in women with dense breasts, which affects 45% of the population. So, this is not a minor issue. This is quite common and when detected early has a 99% survivability rate. Why wouldn't

we want women and their physicians to have the best information and tools available to ensure early detection?

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**Q** And what about the impacts of breast health on women of color and poor women, or those in rural areas that might not have easy access to clinics?

**A** Women in the rest of the world don’t have access to screening technology to determine if there is an issue with their breast and overall health. And there certainly is a lack of treatment options, especially as most cancers are found at a late stage when survivability drops to 25%. Ensuring there are screening tools, such as technologies for telehealth and access to regular screenings is important. When it comes to dense breasts, Black women, Asian women, and Jewish women are disproportionately affected by dense breasts, which makes them three times more likely to develop breast cancer. And this is based on genetics, not environmental factors. And these are just several of the populations without access to accurate screening technologies. There needs to be better, faster, easier, and more accessible screening for all women.

**Q** Can you point to some good news for women in medtech, such as a policy change that has benefitted women or perhaps a specific field of health affecting women that is now getting more attention and awareness?

**A** It hasn't been a great time for women's health policy in the US lately, but the one thing I find positive is that more people, both women and men, are willing and wanting to hear about women's health and it's no longer a taboo subject. That makes me happy and shows progress.

**Q** If you could wave a magic wand and change one thing as it relates to women in medtech, what would that be?

**A** Equal access to quality healthcare, all around the world, with products designed for women.

**Q** When the White House announced its initiative in November, Jill Biden said every woman she knows has shared with her a similar story about leaving her doctor's office with more questions than answers. Is this experience one you can relate to, be it from a business perspective or a personal one?

**A** Absolutely. There isn't a single person I know who hasn't experienced what Dr. Biden described. On a personal level, I have migraines and daily chronic headaches. I still don't have answers for why, how to best treat them, or when they will subside. And on an industry level, as I mentioned earlier, there is no industry norm for the visualization in dense breasts, which, again, affects nearly half of all women. And this, of course, unfortunately results in later breast cancer diagnosis. So why aren't there more solutions for visualization?

**Q** And lastly, what is the biggest misconception about women's health?

**A** Many people think that women's health only affects the "bikini regions." But women's health concerns a woman's entire body as well as how shared diseases affect women differently. There needs to be better solutions for women, more research, more innovations, and ones that are designed by women.