ARIZONA BIOTECH

ARE WOMEN BREAKING THE GLASS CEILING IN SCIENCE?

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GETTING EVEN
FEMALE RESEARCHERS CONTINUE QUEST FOR PROFESSIONAL EQUALITY

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Women in Arizona are becoming scientists, the glass ceiling is keeping them from reaching top spots and salaries at universities and other research institutions.

Women in science say it could be a combination of the good of being networked still strong at work, coupled with duties at home with husbands and children.

Joan Ranklin Shapiro, who has a medical degree and Ph.D. under her belt, said women make less money in science the same way they do in the business world. "Women scientists, even though who have been productive and successful, very often are well below the men in salaries," said Shapiro, who serves as vice president of research at St. Joseph's Hospital and Medical Center in Phoenix.

Shapiro thinks women are being made even though the number of women who chair medical departments probably can be counted on one hand. As in other professions, women are not less qualified than men, causing them to work harder to prove themselves, she said.

"What we have to do is continue to work toward change," she said. "We need to continually remind people that those of equal position and merit deserve similar compensation." Shapiro remembers when she was going to medical school how pregnant students would be told to take a leave of absence until the baby was born. "Having children was once considered a medical disability," she said. Some scientists have chosen their careers over children, putting them on a faster track to the top.

Women researchers are prevalent at Barrow Neurological Institute. Pictured left to right, clockwise from front: Susana Martinez-Conde, Joan Shapiro, Leslie Baxter, Lucy Troiman, Adrienne Scheck and Denise Campagnolo.

Adrienne Scheck, senior staff scientist and director of solid tumor and infected disease research at Barrow Neurological Institute, said she was one of the first to find what her lab does because she doesn't have a family tagging her lab coat to get home and make dinner. "I've been married to the lab most of my life," Scheck said. "I've been working hard at putting some balance in my life.

She has seen colleagues struggling with balancing the needs of their families with the demands of the lab. "When push comes to shove, the person who ends up being put out is the woman," she said. "Not always, but most of the time.

Susana Martinez-Conde, who works in the Laboratory of Visual Neuroscience at BNI, said the administrative positions typically go to the men because there aren't enough women mentors in science to help guide young scientists' careers. "The role of mentorship, especially from senior females who have gone through similar career paths, would be very helpful," she said.

Sometimes women step away from their careers to start a family, which puts them behind, said Marcia Levitus, associate professor and researcher at The Biodesign Institute at Arizona State University. With a Ph.D. in physical chemistry, Levitus said many women entering the sciences, which would help show men that having women around is normal. "Hopefully, in a few decades, things will get better and better," she said. "There's still a struggle to break through that barrier.

The good news, however, is that over the past several decades, the number of women earning degrees in science and engineering fields has exploded, according to data from the National Science Foundation.

"Very often, I'm the only woman in any meetings or discussions," she said. "That's tough."

FAST FACTS
The amount of women awarded science and engineering doctorate degrees in the U.S.:

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<th>Year</th>
<th>Women</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tr>
<td>1986</td>
<td>924</td>
<td>8%</td>
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<tr>
<td>1988</td>
<td>1,939</td>
<td>28.8%</td>
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<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td>9,819</td>
<td>37.6%</td>
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Of all science and engineering doctorate degrees awarded in the U.S., percentage earned by women:

1986: 8%
1988: 28.8%
1994: 37.6%

Source: National Science Foundation

ON THE COVER