

Franklin Women

August 2017 Newsletter

I have some news to share. This month I started a [new job](#) with the Bupa Health Foundation which is exciting and daunting at the same time. Exciting because it's a role that calls upon the health policy skills I developed at NCIRS while also giving me lots of opportunity to grow. The daunting part is that this role moves me further away from my training as a health and medical researcher. As I look back at my career I think this is an enviable transition for me but it's still hard to let go of being the 'researcher'.

However, I had many other feelings when I first left the lab (and academia) 6 years ago, including a sense of failure and uncertainty, which I no longer feel about leaving an academic career. I now know through my own experiences and from amazing people I've met through Franklin Women that there are so many successful and rewarding career paths that allow us to contribute to improving health...and this leads me to our next [event](#) (and the theme of this newsletter) – Career Transitions. At this event we will showcase and celebrate various careers women are pursuing in the health research sector as well as highlight the many transferable skills developed through scientific training which are considered valuable to future employers.

For me, the challenge isn't trying to follow that one 'right' career path, but rather the soul-searching to find a career path that's right for you. I hope you can join us at our next [event](#) to learn how to answer that question by hearing from others who are embarking on their journey, whether it be in academia, policy, advocacy, law or industry. Opportunities in the health and medical research sector are endless and exciting...

Happy reading!

Melina and the FW Team



What happened this month

- [OneVentures](#) recently launched a \$170M Healthcare Fund and are looking to invest in commercialisation, drug development and diagnostics
- This year marks the 10th anniversary of the [Dance Your PhD](#) contest!
- The [STARportal](#) has been launched, a searchable database to help students and teachers find STEM events in their area
- [#SheSpeaks](#) is a curated list of inspirational Australian women speakers on STEM

and STEM education – do you know someone to nominate?

- Slides are available from the recent webinar on the upcoming reforms to the [NHMRC's grant program](#)
 - The first 2 competitive grant opportunities for the [MRFF](#) have opened
 - Applications are open for [ON Accelerate](#), a structured sci-tech accelerator program
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Career Profile

Meet [Dr Martijn Bijker](#), Founder and Director of [from SCIENCE to PHARMA](#) and a speaker and sponsorship partner for our upcoming [Career Transitions Breakfast!](#)



What is your training in the health or medical science field? I have a bachelor degree in chemistry and a masters in biochemistry with additional majors in immunology and immunoncology (IO). My PhD is also in IO (my big passion). I did my post-doc in IO at the Garvan Institute and after 3.5 years moved out of academia into Medical Science Liaison (MSL). I worked as an MSL for more than 4 years, followed by being a biomarker manager and now as launch-lead IO at Merck (Serono).

How/why did you come to found your own company – from SCIENCE to PHARMA?

When I became an MSL, a lot of my friends and old colleagues asked me how I managed to get in, as it was (and still is) deemed impossible to become an MSL without having any prior (MSL or) pharma experience. I then coached a lot of researchers on how to transition from science to pharma. I was 1 year into my MBA when I had a back operation and was off work for 7 weeks lying on the couch. That's when the idea came up to start an MSL training company. Two months later I registered the company name 'from SCIENCE to PHARMA' and 4 months later I started to train my first candidate. A year later, together with a friend of mine, we changed the business model and built the first ever global fully online MSL training platform where we have now worked with thousands of aspirant MSL candidates.

Tell us more about the Medical Science Liaison role specifically? The MSL is the disease matter expert in the medical (affairs) department of the pharmaceutical/biotech company and must have a strong scientific and/or clinical background. Because of this background, the MSL is the first point of contact to answer any complex scientific and clinical questions from the internal stakeholders (their colleagues) and external stakeholders (the doctors). MSLs are therefore often at the forefront of cutting edge clinical and scientific developments and are sharing this information with the medical and scientific community to improve patient outcomes.

What are some of the qualities and/or skills possessed by health and medical researchers that are valuable in the MSL role? Being able to quickly read and

comprehend complex science and then explain it in easy to understand language to clinicians is a skill that is very important for an MSL that many of you researchers have. The challenge, on the other hand, is that the MSL role is far more clinically orientated, which can be a challenge for many basic researchers. The MSL should have excellent communication skills, something that might be challenging for some researchers. Having this complex mix of many different skill sets makes the MSL role quite difficult to get into. We would say in the Netherlands ‘you are looking for a sheep with five legs’ – very rare, though they do exist.

What do you think makes this an interesting, exciting and rewarding career path? As a scientist in the lab at the bench you are far away from being able to change patients. If you are lucky the pathway you discovered or the protein–protein interaction you published on might, in 10–20 years, be useful to target a specific disease. As an MSL, you are right in the middle of changing patients’ lives. You see the latest clinical data coming out, you discuss them with the key opinion leaders and hear their perspective on how this can be practice-changing. You are literally involved in potentially changing millions of patients’ lives. And that feels good, I must say.

What food have you eaten too much of? Nothing I ate too much of, but I am a sweet tooth and am crazy about good cakes, patisserie, marzipan and anything with almonds!

IT’S COMPETITION TIME!

As part of our upcoming [event on Career Transitions](#), FW and FSTP are running a competition for the FW community to win a number of fully sponsored places in one of their MSL training courses. All you need to do is email us (hello@franklinwomen.com.au) before 18 September and answer the two questions below, in less than 100 words each. To get the most value from the training course you need to be in the last year of your PhD or farther along in your research career. The recipients will be announced at our Career Transitions Breakfast, but you will be notified if you are successful but not present at the event.

1. Why do pharma companies hire MSLs?
2. Why would you be a good MSL?

Please also briefly tell us your background (for example, 1st year PhD student oncology at UNSW or 2nd year Post-doc infectious diseases at Monash etc.)



Upcoming FW Event

Our [next event](#) is all about career transitions. It’s been a hot conversation topic for FW members so we’ve dedicated a whole breakfast to discuss the whys and hows of transitioning careers within health and medical research. In this article, [FW Peer Advisory Committee Member Magda Ellis](#) discusses her own career transition from medical research scientist to health economist.



Whether through choice or circumstance, career transitions can be daunting. My career transition was through choice. While that made it easier, it still took a long time to pluck up the courage to do it, mainly because I had no idea what else I wanted to do, what I would be good at, or how I could possibly present myself as a good candidate for a new role. I had only ever known academia/research and after 8 years as a post-doc, I found it hard to recognise my skill set in a different environment.

I started out in research on a great trajectory having secured a CJ Martin Fellowship and then an NHMRC project grant. However, I became increasingly frustrated for several reasons and the time came when I knew I had to make a change.

After endless hours on Google looking for different career possibilities, I saw an advert for a health economist. This had never entered my mind previously but, from the job description, I realised that I already possessed many of the required skills. I didn't apply for the job since I didn't want to apply without a sound understanding of what was entailed and I was only a year into my NHMRC project grant and wanted to see the project through. I decided that once the project was finished, I would make the leap. Giving myself a deadline made me proactive and ensured I was in a good position to move when the time came.

I enrolled into a graduate diploma program in health economics and policy through Monash University to learn more about the field. Furthermore, I took time to talk to contacts in industry to obtain a better insight into other potential careers. I took up an internship in the Sydney office of [Bio-Link Australia](#) – a life sciences business development consultancy. I was there for only 3 months but it was hugely enriching. Working in such a different environment boosted my self-confidence and taught me to recognise the value of my scientific training and the transferable skills I had beyond the laboratory.

When the time came to look for work, the job market was incredibly slow. I made my own list of potential employers and set about cold-calling each one. Surprisingly, I obtained a number of very positive responses; while some were not actively recruiting, I received much encouragement and additional contacts through the process. Within 1 month I had two job offers!

What would I recommend to anyone considering a leap into a new career?

1. Don't be afraid. Transitions are frequent and can be turned to one's advantage.
2. Be proactive. Put yourself out there, attend networking events, talk to people in different sectors. It will build confidence and provide greater perspective.
3. Keep an eye on the job market at all times.

4. Take the time to know what you are moving into, how it will advance your career or lead to greater opportunities.

Magda is a senior health outcomes analyst at THEMA Consulting. A lover of the outdoors, travel and good food, she can often be found planning her next getaway or looking for new places to feed her addiction to seriously spicy food.

Increasing opportunities for research impact

Globally and in Australia, research impact is a hot topic for funders. But what can we as health and medical researchers do to ensure our work contributes to society? To help answer these questions (and more) [Tamika Heiden](#) from [Knowledge Translation Australia](#) talks about the Research Impact Summit.



As a researcher, I was always plagued by the possibility of doing more with my work and solving bigger problems. After all, I became a researcher so that I could change the world!

But what exactly do we mean by research impact? Traditionally, this has referred to the citation rates of journal articles. However, more recently, research impact refers to change outside of academia, such as policy, practice or process change based on the evidence from research. As researchers, there is ever-increasing pressure to show that the work we do provides broad and sustainable benefits. Funders in Australia and globally are focusing on the translation and impact of research to ensure that money spent on

research delivers economic, environmental or social benefits outside of academia.

Given this global focus and current interest, last year I came up with the slightly crazy and lofty idea of bringing the how-to of research impact to researchers. One of the biggest challenges within research is working out where to focus our time and how to save money. With the key elements of time and money in mind, I developed the 3-day online Research Impact Summit, and provided it for free. I had gotten to thinking about my ideal conference, what did I want to know and who in the world should I ask? In answering this question, it became clear that running an event online would allow me to have all the speakers I wanted speaking at the one event.

The Summit is not your standard conference. Aside from being virtual, it is real and raw with the learning opportunities coming through one-on-one interviews. The objectives are for researchers to hear the 'how to' of creating and measuring impact, and not just the 'what to do'. In 2016, the Summit brought together more than 20 speakers and 1200 attendees from 16 countries over 3 days to talk about research impact. Speakers included researchers,

knowledge translation specialists, technology providers, innovators in the higher education space, and policy experts. To keep things social, we used Twitter feeds, a Facebook group and online chat boxes to provide opportunities for discussion, feedback, learning and networking for individuals and organisations to improve their research impact. The Summit provided something for everyone, but ultimately each conversation covered an element of creating or measuring impact, be it through planning, strategy development, engagement and collaboration, understanding implementation, using technology and online platforms, or understanding the learnings from those that have been through the measurement process.

The Summit was so well received that I am running it again on [16–18 October 2017](#) and you can grab your free pass!

Tamika holds a PhD from the University of Western Australia and runs her own consulting firm, Knowledge Translation Australia. She is a cycling fanatic, although this is weather dependent, and a self-confessed coffee snob which goes with the territory when you live in Melbourne!

We are loving right now...

Books of the non-fiction variety! Conversations around career transitions often require some introspective thinking. To help get you going here are some of our favourite related books and stories:

- [Option B](#) is all about facing adversity, building resilience and finding joy
 - One might say that [Do Cool Sh*t](#) was one of the inspiring factors behind establishing FW!
 - In [Daily rituals: How artists work](#), inspiring minds describe their daily rituals to get the work they love to do done
 - [Quiet: The power of introverts in a world that can't stop talking](#), the title says it all really
 - Pretty much anything on this [reading list](#) from the Happiness Concierge
 - And I'll end this Career Transitions edition of the FW newsletter with this [inspiring story](#)
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We want to include your contributions in our newsletter. If you are doing something, or know about something, that you think other women in our field would be interested in, drop us a [line](#). We are all about sharing, promoting and collaborating between women in our field. Don't be shy, it might bring about a great opportunity! Want to receive our newsletters directly to your in-box? [Subscribe here](#).