**Date: 4/22/21**

**Respondent: Tami Annable**

**Welcome to MedTech chat where we discover the latest healthcare tools, device technology as well as research approaches. We’ll be talking to designers, insights professionals and other executives to better understand how MedTech is helping patients and those caring for them now and in the future. Today I’m very excited to be talking to Tami Annable. She brings more than 30 years of cancer research and expertise to her work as executive direction for Temple Health and Bioscience District. Previously she served as a research scientist for Lederle Laboratories, now Pfizer in New York and Novartis Pharmaceuticals in San Diego. Combining her background expertise and passion for helping others, Tami helps to bring innovative solutions to life at Temple’s 5,000 square foot office and laboratory facility located in the heart of Texas’ biotech corridor. Tami works alongside promising young biotech companies who need mentorship, support, seed funding and resources to produce exciting medical solutions. Thank you for joining me today, Tami.**

You’re very welcome.

**Tell us about how you got into this work.**

It’s a really great story. One of the reasons that I became a cancer researcher in the first place was to help people. When I moved to Texas from California, I had the opportunity to become a lab manager for Temple Health and Bioscience District. Since this is an incubator for biotech, health related startup companies, my expertise in research was really a godsend with running a lab and helping these start up company’s entrepreneurs work with the lab equipment that we have at Temple Health and Bioscience District. I started off as a lab manager and quickly became the assistant executive director. When my executive director decided to retire, it was a natural fit for the board to name the executive director. What’s really important about Temple Health and Bioscience District is that these are early stage life science startup companies at our incubator. We do have not only research startup companies but MedTech startup companies as well.

**You’ve given us some of this, but I’m always curious how people get to the path they’re on. Is there anything else you want to tell us about becoming a cancer researcher?**

Yes, I wanted to be a physician. I wanted to deliver babies. That was my aspiration growing up. It was a funny story because I figured I started off, I had my children early and then went to college. I figured I’d never get into med school putting down that I was a full time mom. I decided to start working for physicians. I started to work for a pediatrician and then I switched over to an allergist. At the allergist’s office, I started doing their RAST blood testing. I was working on lab in the allergist’s office. I got offered a job at Avon in their toxicology department because of the equipment that I was using in the allergist’s office. From there my best friend had moved over to Lederle Labs, which was a pharmaceutical company that has now been acquired by Pfizer. She was doing cancer research. They had an opening. I really liked my job, I really enjoyed being where I was and she had her boss call me. He says to me, quote unquote, Tami do you want to work on makeup or do you want to cure cancer? he put that guilt on me right off the top, so I was like, OK I’ll come in for an interview. That’s what started my trek in cancer research. I’ve been lucky enough to work for all the big pharmaceutical companies and my path went from working on pathways like EGFR to doing immunology, cancer immunology which is the up and coming trend in cancer research right now. My husband wanted to relocate from New York to California so I went to work for Novartis. California is awesome, San Diego is awesome, the weather is beautiful, however it’s really expensive to live there. If you want to retire one day, that may not be the best place to be. My daughter happened to live in Texas. She kept sending me houses and she worked on me for two years. I finally broke down, moved to Texas, it was the smartest thing I ever did. let me tell you, the people in Temple, Texas are amazing. They are so nice and so great to work with. I went to work at the VA doing liver cancer research. I was tasked to buy some really expensive equipment valued at over half a million dollars for the VA. I was told to stop what I was doing because there was this incubator across the street that had federal funding and was going to buy the equipment for us. That’s my path on how I ended up at Temple Health and Bioscience district.

**You hit on some really important points, one of which is you have to really follow your passion and have a noble purpose and really enjoy what you do, as well as surround yourself with friends and live in a good location. It sounds like you have all those, which is awesome. I wonder if you could tell me more about this incubator.**

It is incredibly novel. Let me tell you why. A group of men, I think there were seven of them, sat around a table back in 2003 and recognized the fact that we had a legacy hospital here called Scott and White and people for over 100 miles would come to this hospital because their parents went there and their grandparents went there. We also have the fourth largest VA in the country in Temple, Texas. We have Texas A&M has their AgriLife here. We are surrounded by life sciences in Temple. 42% of all of our employment is in healthcare. They figured, we have all this healthcare but we have no biotech to feed it. They went to the legislature and asked to become this special district. We are the only such legislation in the state of Texas. What this legislation allows us to do, it’s based on economic development in the life sciences in Temple, Texas. We are able to collect property tax from the citizens of Temple. That’s how I fund my incubator. What that means for my startup companies is, I’m not interested in their equity, I’m not interested in taking a piece of their business. My only interest is to mentor them, give them the resources they need, give them the contacts that they’re looking for to help them grow. My ask is that when you are ready to hire, you look at the pool of Temple employees first. Obviously, if you need a biochemist and I don’t have a biochemist in Temple and you hire one from Boston, I’m not going to kick you out of my incubator. I’m asking you to look at Temple first. Then when you outgrow my incubator, which is our hope, that you look at positioning yourself and your new business in Temple, Texas. That’s what makes us unique as well as because we are this piece of legislation, we were able to get over a million dollars’ worth of equipment with federal funds. It’s a great incubator, it’s great equipment not only for research but for medical devices. For example, we have a state of the art Stratasys J750 3D printer that you can print your prototype with. We have a floor to ceiling [inaudible 00:09:12] machine that you can take that prototype, pull it, twist it, figure out your break points and go back to the drawing board and start all over again. For our researchers, we have a microscope that can cut one cell out of a piece of tissue. It’s a Leica laser microdissection microscope, and then you can take those cells, make RNA out of it and we have a nano string which can, it’s basically a PPR on steroids that you can take a 96 weld plate and look at over 800 genes. It’s got some pretty exciting technology at THBD. I’d love to direct you to our website for more information. You can do a virtual tour. That is Temple Bioscience dot org. Is there anything else that I can answer for you?

**This is really exciting. It’s a brilliant idea for the state and for you guys to be doing this. I can totally see how it can help in economics and in really getting MedTech bioscience type companies up and running and then have them stay in the area. I think it’s a brilliant approach. I don’t think I’ve heard this anywhere else. This sounds like this is one of the first places, is that true?**

I have to say that I’ve been at conferences and I’ve talked to a lot of people. I cannot tell you how many different people in different states who said to me, this is a fantastic paradigm, how do you do it? How do you set this up with the legislation? It’s great because you don’t have to worry about applying for grants, you don’t have to worry about can we keep our prices incredibly low, because we’re not for profit. It’s all about mentoring these startup companies.

**You’ve given me a lot of things that I imagine can inspire one but I’m curious if you can tell me what inspires you at work every day?**

It’s my tenet companies, it’s my entrepreneurs. They are so full of life and so brilliant and have so many great ideas that it’s an absolute pleasure to come to work to help them succeed and, interestingly enough we—prior to COVID had more medical device in our incubator. When COVID hit, I got three research companies off the bat, not necessarily involved with COVID but it seemed like people realized that if they have dreams and they have aspirations, now’s the time to do it. Don’t wait, jump on that bandwagon, go ahead, make your dreams a reality and that’s really what inspires me, is the people that I work with. They’re pretty amazing. I want to share with you one of the companies that is in my incubator. It’s called Industrial Genetics. They were motivated by COVID, they started a waste water company to analyze waste water in, let’s say colleges so that they’ll know there’s a specific dorm that has COVID present but he took that and expanded it and now he’s working on building research labs in Austin, Texas. It’s amazing the progression and what’s important to note, especially for a startup company is that it’s OK to pivot. It’s OK that if you have this initial idea in mind, that if it turns out that there’s a better idea out there, it’s OK to reach out and grab that idea. I also have a company called Synthetics that’s working on a brand new form of energy. This woman is so brilliant. She’s winning awards, not only in the United States but internationally. It’s pretty exciting and that’s what motivates me.

**I’m excited and this definitely sounds like great work and it’s so true that now is the time to either pivot to try new things or to follow your dreams and your passions, if not now, when. I wonder if you could tell us what historical figure or fictional character do you relate to or are inspired by?**

I have to tell you, it’s Wonder Woman. The first Wonder Woman movie was so inspiring for women empowerment. You’re talking about women leadership and honestly, it’s so important since, as we all know there is definitely discrimination out there, in all shapes and forms and women are definitely get discriminated against. They don’t make as much money as a man does in the same position. There’s numerous things that I can mention but she empowers women and I think that’s so important from young girls growing up to women entrepreneurs to women in business. That is my model.

**So true and so important. I totally agree with what you’re saying. Great inspiration. I know you’ve given us some information of how people could follow up, I’m definitely going to be posting a variety of links on the site where people could go find this. I know that you have an upcoming webinar. Wonder if you could tell us where people could follow up with you, what’s the best way?**

Fantastic. One of the, one of our mission is education. We believe strongly in the education. We put on an e-learning series every month. This next e-learning series, which is going to be April 27th at 12 pm Eastern time is partnering with Johnson and Johnson. Understand the why, how, what and needs in Johnson and Johnson and the young man that I’m going to be talking with, Ibraheem Badejo is the person that does the purchasing for the medical devices at Johnson and Johnson. this is an incredible, free series and there will be a question and answer period so you can talk to him directly with your questions on how to present to Johnson and Johnson. As you know, they have a group called J Labs, he’ll be talking about J Labs as well, so that you can learn how you can apply to them. If you go to our website, which again is Temple bioscience dot org, there is a tab for the e-learning series. you can click on that tab, it will bring up the new, most current learning webinar and you can register there. We also have a YouTube channel that hosts all of our prior webinars. For example, if you’re interested in teaming up with the FDA, we have a webinar about FDA. We have a webinar about NIH. It would be worth your while to take a look at our past webinars and see if there’s anything that would work for your needs now.

**This is a great resource, I appreciate that. What I’ll do is I’ll post all of this, your email, your phone, your website as well as Twitter, LinkedIn, the YouTube, Instagram and in particular this e-learning series that you’re talking about and for the listeners, that’s central time, 12 o’clock on Tuesday the27th of April. That’s great. Thank you so much for joining us, anything else in closing you wanted to say?**

You are very welcome and to let you know that our mission is to grow 21st century jobs by fostering bioscience education, research and healthcare in central Texas. Our vision is for Temple, Texas to become widely recognized as a national leader in bioscience research, education and commercialization. I think that we’re doing a good job as a first step to get there.

**This is great work. Thank you so much for chatting with me today, I really appreciate it.**

Tom, I want to thank you for inviting me. I really enjoyed chatting with you and it’s all about helping people so if we can help one of your listeners, then it’s a win.

**Thank you so much.**

You’re welcome, stay safe everyone.