

## SfRBM Featured Woman in Science

Daret St. Clair, Ph.D.



**Hometown:** Lexington, Kentucky

**Title(s) and current institution:** James Graham Brown Foundation Endowed Chair, Associate Director for Basic Research, Markey Cancer Center, and Interim Chair, Department of Toxicology and Cancer Biology, College of Medicine, University of Kentucky.

**Research Interests:** Mechanisms by which reactive oxygen species (ROS) and reactive nitrogen species (RNS) contribute to normal tissue injury and cancer formation. ([Research webpage](#))

**How I fell in love with redox chemistry/biology in medicine:** The fascinating roles of redox chemistry and biology in health and diseases were introduced to me by my mentor, the late Dr. Larry Oberley.

**Best advice you have ever received:** Being a scholar is more important than being popular.

**Pet peeves in science:** Insufficient resources to support good science.

**Three things people may not know about me:**

- 1) My successes came from modeling role models.
- 2) I have never promoted a woman of inadequate quality for the job.
- 3) Study bird's brain is on my to do list.

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**[Samantha \(Sam\) Giordano](#), Ph.D.**



**Hometown:** Staten Island, NY

**Title and current institution:** Postdoctoral Fellow at the University of Alabama at Birmingham

**Research interests:** The effects of estrogen and estrogen deprivation on mitochondria, and cholesterol homeostasis in inflammatory cells.

**How I fell in love with the role of estrogen in mitochondrial function:** I love studying the mitochondria because the DNA is maternally inherited and being a girl that is fascinating! I am a bit of a feminist (hehehe). During my first post doc, I was exposed to the world of estrogen research and I thought that the mitochondria and its maternally inherited DNA had to somehow be linked to estrogen levels (the female hormone) and now I am hooked! There is an increased incidence of CVD, diabetes etc. in women after menopause and since mitochondrial dysfunction plays a role in these diseases, it is interesting to understand the role of estrogen.

**A life challenge you had to overcome:** One of the biggest challenges I had to overcome was admitting I didn't want to be a tenure track faculty member in a large academic institution, but at a smaller liberal arts college. I had always heard that being successful was a big academic job, but admitting to myself, that an undergraduate liberal arts primarily teaching job was the right position for me was difficult. I didn't want to disappoint my mentors but now I know I don't want to disappoint myself. Teaching at a primarily undergraduate college is where I am meant to be.

**Best advice you have ever received:** Take time for yourself, you only live one life. I used to think I needed to be constantly busy, always working toward a goal. I have now learned to appreciate a quiet day at home, just relaxing.

**Pet peeves in science:** Sloppy notetaking! How can anyone replicate your work if it's not organized!!! Always take detailed, organized notes!

**Book or article that you would recommend:** "Letters to a Young Scientist" Edward O. Wilson. This was a graduation gift from a friend. The different lessons imparted in the different letters describe the goal of all scientists, to problem solve. The advice is beneficial for all young scientists aiming for all different career paths in science!

**Three things people may not know about me:**

- 1) I'm addicted to caffeine...I love coffee!
- 2) I love the color pink (Although anyone who attended the past annual meeting knows that since I wore pink every day).
- 3) I love hard rock music; I have even been to see Disturbed and Rob Zombie.

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[Yvonne Janssen-Heininger](#), Ph.D.



**Hometown:** Elsloo, The Netherlands

**Title and current institution:** Professor, Department of Pathology and Laboratory Medicine, The University of Vermont, Burlington, VT

**Research interests:** Redox biology and the pathogenesis of fibrotic lung remodeling

**How I fell in love with biomedical research:** As an undergraduate student, in one of my classes I was challenged to identify organ sections under a microscope, and discuss potential causes of disease by performing literature searches. This is how I encountered my first lung tissue. I realized then how many questions about the causes of lung disease had remained unanswered. I started to read articles, and realized how fascinating, delicate and adaptable the lung is. Given the unique oxygen environment, a passion for redox biology was born.

**A life challenge you had to overcome:** I was not eligible for medical school, in Holland, as I was missing Chemistry as a core class in high school. My high school chemistry teacher had not encouraged me, true for numerous female students in my class. Via a difficult way, I chose to study Environmental Health Sciences, at Maastricht University, where I was exposed to biomedical research. After A-cing the required chemistry courses, I could have switched to medical school at that time, but instead I stayed the course, as I loved the research-centered curriculum. A closed door led to unexpected opportunities, especially given that my research took me to the USA!

**Best advice you have ever received:** Work on really important problems, and ask yourself what you are going to contribute to your field that has impact? This could be a new method, reagent, or drug. You do not want to always ask your colleagues for a reagent. Develop something new yourself, that will benefit others and hopefully the broader community!

**Pet peeves in science:** Stamp collecting! Lack of running controls! Commercial kits- I really cannot stand these as you give up control!

**Book or article that you would recommend:** All Nicholas Sparks novels. See below. I am not into complicated books. NY Times, Tuesday science sections.

## **Three things people may not know about me:**

- 1) I am incredibly un-organized in day-to day-life, forget ALL the simple details. My husband tells me that I have to wear a name tag at conferences so that I remember my own name.
- 2) I love to read novels that are simple, happy and positive, books you do not have to think about! Beachy-type novels. I cannot stand book clubs, as one should not have to analyze a book meant for pleasure.
- 3) I am a hit and-mostly-miss cook, as I never follow a recipe, and make dishes up as a go. Dinner parties at my house range from big successes to deep embarrassment.
- 4) I do judge books by their cover and wines by their label...