

WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP



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Pamela Fralick

President

Innovative Medicines Canada (IMC)

Pamela, you have a diverse work background. What have you looked for in jobs throughout your career?

I've followed a few guiding principles in my career. One is purpose—and sometimes that purpose was just practicality. My first job as a 13-year-old was one I created to sweep floors at a military store in Europe. It wasn't that I had an aspiration to sweep floors, but I was keen to have some pocket money and their floors were dirty. Second, I need to feel I have something to offer from my accumulated background that will be of value in a job. Equally important, I have to feel there's something to gain and a stretch for me—some part of the job I can't do yet. I need to know I'll get a balance between the workload and what I like to do away from my job, including volunteer work. And finally, a job has to promise some fun and laughter.

In grad school, I chose internships that were out of the box—things that weren't what I thought my path was at the time. One was at Health and Welfare Canada in the Non-Medical Use of Drugs directorate. It became a defining experience that I drew on when I was employed by the military to work at one of their alcohol rehabilitation clinics; I was subsequently hired as a Regional Drug Education Coordinator and then moved into the Alcohol and Other Drugs unit at Health Canada, as well

as the Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse; and I later chaired the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH). That all started with one decision that added diversity to my experience and expanded my horizons.

I'm a big fan of saying "yes" to unconventional opportunities because you don't know where they'll lead. That includes volunteerism, where you can pick up knowledge, skill sets and leadership skills you'll use later.

What unique perspective do you bring to IMC?

I've had exposure to most of the key aspects of Canada's health-care sector. For example, at Health Canada I was exposed to the federal government's perspective on health care. When I was CEO of the Canadian Physiotherapy Association, I chaired an informal coalition, the Health Action Lobby, which includes national health associations representing doctors, nurses, physiotherapists, social workers and more. That's where I had an opportunity to better understand the issues and concerns of health-care professionals. And then I ran the Canadian Healthcare Association, meeting with representatives of the organizations that deliver the health systems provincially. I've also worked in the charitable sector, including at the Canadian Cancer Society, focusing on the patient voice. So I feel I can bring a unique appreciation of all the different

perspectives, how they play into policy decisions and the value of innovation to IMC.

Looking to the future, what's your vision for IMC?

We need to emphasize the value of the research-based pharmaceutical industry. I don't know that I've ever been in a room where anyone could say they haven't benefited from a drug or a vaccine. As new cutting-edge medicines become available, there's huge value in Canadians being able to access them quickly. The private health insurance market plays an important role in that it not only offers faster access to more medicines compared to public plans, but it has the agility to foster innovation in reimbursement models, data sharing, business and collaboration, which are integral to the future of the sector. IMC and our members also work with all health stakeholders to build more resilient health systems here in Canada and beyond, especially in light of lessons learned from the global response to the pandemic. We're part of a broader life sciences ecosystem; and for that ecosystem to be healthy, we need a valued, vibrant and innovative pharmaceutical industry.

