

Championing Women Scientists: Meet Researcher Jessica R. Weaver

LifeNet Health LifeSciences is committed to championing women who are paving the way in science. This month, in honor of International Women's Day, we're featuring some of our women scientists.

Jessica Weaver joined the LifeNet Health LifeSciences team four years ago. She is an experienced researcher who holds a bachelor's degree in biology from William & Mary and a doctorate in biochemistry from the University of Colorado Boulder. Jessica completed postdoctoral training at the University of Pennsylvania and Eastern Virginia Medical School (EVMS). Before joining LifeNet Health, she worked in a virus lab studying vaccines, and she has done extensive research on Type II diabetes as part of the Strelitz Diabetes Center at EVMS.

Here's our Q&A with Jessica.

What drew you into science?

Both of my parents are chemists, so I followed in the family footsteps. Science always interested me. I like the order and the logic of chemistry. It's sort of like a puzzle. There are missing boxes that you can fill in if you gather enough data. That really appeals to me.

I like being in labs. I don't mind working by myself and being independent for periods of time. I can collect data and be productive. I also like working on a team.

What you love about LifeNet Health LifeSciences?

I can't speak highly enough about my team. I like that feedback and that collaboration.

In general, LifeNet Health has been very good to me. I was able to have a first-author paper here. For me, publishing is critical. It's something permanent. My name is out there contributing to science. It gives me an idea of how good my work is. Other scientists are looking at it and critiquing it. It gives you a gauge of how well you are performing, and if you are doing good science. I like that feeling that it's being reviewed. If there are issues, I'm going to know.

What is the most exciting project you are working on currently?

We're working on a project for isolating lung cells. Currently, with COVID going around, the virus is infecting a specific type of lung cell. LifeNet Health is providing cells for researchers to allow them to study the infection model. For us, it's really a focus to ensure we're isolating quality lung cells. Our goal in LifeSciences is to give hope, restore health, and save lives. We're always keeping that commitment in mind.

Do you have any advice for other women who are interested in scientific careers?

You need the right personality to pursue the sciences. It can be frustrating at times because the scientific process is forever. There's always going to be another question. If you're a good scientist, you're never going to finish. You must be resilient. You can't dwell on your failures. You're more likely to fail at things than to succeed, but when you do succeed, that's when you get that sense of accomplishment. If you're interested in finding things out, and you're willing to take your bumps and bruises along the way – to get that sense of accomplishment when you solve things – then I would recommend going into science.

Changing Science. Accelerating Discovery. Optimizing Outcomes.