CHEMICAL HERITAGE FOUNDATION

PATRICIA F. DUCY

The Pew Scholars Program in the Biomedical Sciences

Transcript of Interviews
Conducted by

David J. Caruso

at

Columbia University
New York, New York

on

16 and 17 July 2008

(With Subsequent Corrections and Additions)

Patricia F. Ducy

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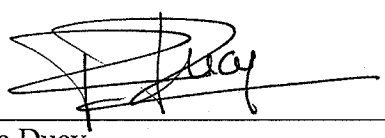
(Signature) 
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Oral History Program
315 Chestnut Street
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PATRICIA F. DUCY

1964 Born in Lyon, France on 30 July

Education

1989 M.S., Université Claude Bernard Lyon 1, Differentiation and Genetics

1996 Ph.D., Université Claude Bernard Lyon 1, Genetics

Professional Experience

University of Texas M. D. Anderson Cancer Center
1993-1998 Postdoctorate, Molecular Genetics

Baylor College of Medicine
1998-2000 Research Associate, Molecular and Human Genetics
2000-2006 Assistant Professor, Molecular and Human Genetics

Columbia University
2006-present Associate Professor, Pathology

Honors

1996-1998 McDuffie Fellow of the Arthritis Foundation
1997 Houston Endowment Scientific Achievement Fund Fellowship Award
1998 J. V. Satterfield Arthritis Investigator Award, Arthritis Foundation
2000 Basil O'Connor Award, March of Dimes
2001 Women's Fund for Health Education and Research Award
2001-2005 Pew Scholar in the Biomedical Sciences
2003 Fuller Albright Award from the American Society for Bone and Mineral Research

ABSTRACT

Patricia F. Ducy grew up in Lyon, France, an only child. Her father was in insurance and her mother was a secretary. She attended a very good school a fair distance from her home, so she spent much time with her grandparents who lived near the school. She had a happy, busy childhood in a close family who all spent weekends renovating an old farmhouse. She also loved music and studying guitar. Schooldays were very long and required a lot of homework, but Ducy was self-motivated and had no trouble doing well. When she was about twelve she had a biology teacher who inspired her to go into genetics.

After high school, she wanted to go into genetics but had to study pharmacy and then general biology before she was accepted into Université Claude Bernard's PhD program in genetics. She worked in Robert Garrone's histology lab, where she conducted research on actin in fresh-water sponges. She expected to stay in France and do research, but when she heard Gerard Karsenty give a talk she knew she had found what she wanted to do. She accepted a postdoc in Karsenty's lab at M.D. Anderson Cancer Center at the University of Texas. Though she had published no papers during her PhD years, she published sixteen as a postdoc; one especially—on osteoblastic-specific transcription factor—has been crucial to the field.

She went back to France to look for a job, but facilities in France were limited such that she could not have the large number of mice she needed for her work, so she decided to stay in the United States, accepting a research associate position, then an assistant professorship, at the Baylor College of Medicine. Ducy and Karsenty divided their research, Ducy taking her work on osteoblasts, seeking a connection between fat and bone; they continued to collaborate, and eventually married. Then they moved to Columbia University, where they joined their labs and some of their research.

Throughout the interview Ducy describes the French educational and scientific systems and compares them to the American systems. At the end of the interview she talks about getting the Pew award and about the Pew annual meetings; she analogizes science to cooking, both requiring "magic"; and she decries the need to take time away from the bench to seek funding. She speaks about continuing her work on osteoblasts, with a view to preventing and treating bone loss diseases; she also talks about how she and her husband's labs are beginning to work on diabetes.

INTERVIEWER

David J. Caruso earned a B.A. in the History of Science, Medicine, and Technology from the Johns Hopkins University in 2001 and a Ph.D. in Science and Technology Studies from Cornell University in 2008. His graduate work focused on the interaction of American military and medical personnel from the Spanish-American War through World War I and the institutional transformations that resulted in the development of American military medicine as a unique form of knowledge and practice. David is currently the Program Manager for Oral History at the CHF. His current research interest focuses on the discipline formation of biomedical science in 20th-century America and the organizational structures that have contributed to such formation.

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