

## IN PERSON

## EXECUTIVE PROFILE

# Tesaro's peak performer

MARY LYNNE HEDLEY DEVELOPS DRUGS, CLIMBS MOUNTAINS & TAKES A BACK SEAT TO NO ONE

BY DON SEIFFERT  
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Asked what it's been like to be one of just a handful of women working as senior executives in the local biotech community, Mary Lynne Hedley recently responded: "It's probably like being a guy in biotech."

Alas, Hedley is indeed a woman ahead of her time. A serial entrepreneur, Hedley's most recent foray in drug discovery dates back to 2010 when she and two of her colleagues founded drug developer Tesaro. That was a good 12 months before the latest iteration of the biotech boom gained any momentum.

The company was different from the start, that is, its mission stood out from those of most biotech startups at that time: To not only develop new drugs, but to market and sell them. Hedley says that posed a challenge in the beginning.

"When we talked to people, it didn't resonate with a lot of investors," Hedley said.

Nonetheless, Hedley and her co-founders, Lonnie Moulder and Rick Rodgers, had some clout with potential financial backers, having recently sold their former company, MGI Pharma, to Eisai for \$3.9 billion. "That really opened a lot of doors. It made people think we weren't as crazy as we sounded," she said.

With about five employees, Tesaro launched with a hyper focus on cancer drugs. Within a year it had acquired development rights for a potential therapy to treat nausea from chemotherapy. It would go on to become Tesaro's first drug, a pill called Varubi, that was just approved last month.

Flash forward to the present, and the Waltham company is large by biotech standards, employing 270 people, about 170 of which are based in Waltham. Hedley says that the Tesaro brand is gradually becoming more widely known.



COURTESY PHOTO

## ► CLOSER LOOK

### MARY LYNNE HEDLEY

**Title:** President and chief operating officer

**Age:** 53

**Residence:** Lexington

**Education:** Bachelor of science in microbiology, Purdue University, 1983; Doctor of Philosophy in Immunology, University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center, 1988; post-doctoral work at Harvard University.

"I think our reputation has grown a lot over the past five years," she said.

Hedley planned on a career in academics until she was doing her post-doctoral work at Harvard University. It was while working there that she felt a drive to do something that could more directly help people. Part of her motivation came from work she did through Project Stretch in the mid-1990s to volunteer in medical clinics in Nicaragua and Venezuela, where she had direct contact with patients.

She chose to start developing cancer drugs, and she, Moulder and Rodgers founded Lexington-based Zycos in 1996. It was a few years later that she caught the notice of Earl "Duke" Collier, then an executive vice president at Genzyme Corp. Collier says Zycos was one of several companies Genzyme was considering for acquisition. While the buyout never happened (Zycos was bought by MGI Pharma in 2004), Collier says Hedley made a "huge impression" on him and his team at Genzyme.

"A lot of people are smart, a lot of people are entrepreneurial, a lot of people are energetic, but she had a very strong combination of all those things," said Collier, who now serves as a board member at Tesaro.

Hedley says she and Moulder both lead the company jointly, her expertise in science complementing his background in sales and marketing.

The company plans to apply for FDA approval of at least two more drugs in the next couple of years, an intravenous version of Varubi as well as another to treat ovarian cancer.

Until then, Hedley seems intent on continuing on her uncharted path. Married to Robert Urban, head of the Johnson & Johnson Innovation Center in Boston, the couple has two teenage boys who, as a family unit, have trekked the Inca Trail to explore Machu Picchu in Peru. They've also climbed Mount Kilimanjaro and recently climbed Mount Elbrus, the highest mountain in Europe.

## LESSONS LEARNED

### What led you to start your business?



**EMILY PROOS**  
BLUEWIRE AUDIO LLC

Coming from a family of runners, we saw first-hand the safety and convenience challenges that runners and exercisers have trying to listen to music while exercising.

This led us to develop wearable speakers that eliminate the need for earbuds.



**CINDY WURDEAMAN**  
MENSWEAR STYLIST  
J. HILBURN CLOTHIER

It was time to invest in myself, my entrepreneurial spirit and belief in the J. Hilburn Menswear brand. Now having a flexible schedule

my clients can benefit from styling and wardrobe consulting services more convenient to their busy calendars. Work/life balance is my bonus.



**KONRAD MARTIN**  
TECH ADVISORS

My twin brother and I had been providing IT services to our CPA firm employer and their clients; in 2005 they chose a different direction. We bought their interest

in this fledgling IT company; today, we celebrate our 10th anniversary with more than 100 clients.