

Innovation with heart

AT SHOCKWAVE MEDICAL, DIVERSITY AND EMPLOYEE CREATIVITY HELP DRIVE THE FUTURE OF CARDIOVASCULAR CARE

Women are persistently under-represented in cardiology clinical trials, and undertreated for heart conditions such as the buildup of calcium deposits that can narrow and stiffen blood vessels. What's more, they may also present different symptoms than men, making the identification of heart disease in female patients challenging. As a result, women tend to experience worse long-term cardiovascular healthcare outcomes.

Shockwave Medical aims to change this. The company's intravascular lithotripsy (IVL) technique breaks up calcium in blood vessels with sound waves generated from a tiny balloon inserted via a catheter. The technology, which is safer and more effective than traditional methods, shatters brittle calcium deposits, helping open blood vessels while leaving soft tissue unharmed.

"We're committed to making big investments in areas of unmet needs," says Susan Peterson, senior director, R&D, at Shockwave. "Our patient base is very diverse, and we believe it makes sense that solutions should come from a diverse group of innovators."

The company's more representative approach to cardiovascular care and continued efforts to transform patients' lives through innovation has helped earn Shockwave a spot on *Fast Company's* list of Best Workplaces for Innovators.

A SAFE SPACE FOR NEW IDEAS

Shockwave encourages innovation from the ground up. It does so by fostering employee and company development through internal incubator programs. Employees can pitch ideas outside the purview of existing projects and receive resources to explore them. These incubators essentially become small startups within Shockwave. "They provide a way to look at high-risk, high-reward ideas

to which we can dedicate a team budget to really dig in and find out if they'll be feasible," Peterson says. "It's a great way to keep our innovation pipeline growing."

She adds that the incubator projects also allow employees to have a direct impact on the future of the company: "It's absolutely motivating to know as an R&D employee that you have a voice and are able to build on ideas to see where they can take you."

NURTURING COMMUNITY

Shockwave values diversity and connection as a driver of innovation. For example, Peterson is a founding member of an employee resource group at Shockwave called SWAT (Shockwave Women Achieving Together). The group offers technical workshops and mentoring, schedules guest speakers, and provides a forum for sharing information about the various member projects. "It's a wonderful chance for women from R&D, Quality, and Operations to come together, inspire, and support each other," Peterson says.

Peterson points out that the culture that gave rise to SWAT is key to driving innovations such as IVL and the company's upcoming "EMPOWER CAD" study. EMPOWER CAD is an all-female study in coronary interventions, a first in the space, and is led by female investigators, also a first. The study, which began enrolling candidates in May, aims to provide robust long-term outcome data on female heart patients and help determine whether IVL can become a front-line treatment with equal clinical outcomes in men and women.

"Shockwave is a really safe space where you can be creative and push outside the box," Peterson says. "Employees know that their work matters and directly benefits patients who have no other current treatment options. And that's a really exciting place to be."

SHOCKWAVE'S ALL-FEMALE

SWAT teams create the next generation of IVL and new product innovations to address unmet patient needs.

