

# WOMEN IN AESTHETICS



The Groundbreaking Original Series from Industry Vet Wendy Lewis



GET TO KNOW SAMANTHA KERR, PHD  
CHIEF SCIENTIFIC OFFICER, MERZ AESTHETICS

## WL: How did you get your start in the aesthetics field?

**Samantha Kerr, MD:** From an early age, I had a major passion for science and how things worked. I was always that kid who asked “Why?” about everything. With this inquisitive mindset, I attended the University of Strathclyde in Glasgow, Scotland, and earned a Bachelor of Science Honors degree in biochemistry and immunology. Then I completed my PhD in biochemical parasitology at the University of Glasgow.

After finishing my PhD, I moved to London because there were not many pharmaceutical jobs in Scotland at the time. I started as a medical writer/clinical scientist at a phase 1 unit, testing new drugs in healthy volunteers. After working in pharmaceutical development at several companies in the first few years of my career, I then joined a company to work in neurology on a neuromodulator.

Initially, I was working on therapeutic uses for the drug (eg, excessive sweating, spasticity, overactive bladder); however, we then began investigating aesthetic uses for the product. With this, my interest in aesthetic medicine sparked and that is when my medical aesthetics journey began.

Fast forward to today: I currently lead Merz Aesthetics’ research and

development team with more than 200 scientists worldwide. My team and I drive innovation and bring new products to the market.

## WL: Who were some of your mentors throughout your career, and how did they influence your management style today?

**Dr. Kerr:** I’ve had many people in my career who have been official and unofficial mentors. Everyone has something to teach you if you’re open to listening and learning. It is crucial to surround yourself with people who can inspire and provide you with the tools you need to have continued success in your career.

I have learned so much from many leaders and am very grateful for their support and guidance. My management style, at least what I aspire to be, is to be focused, supportive, and calm. I believe this provides a thriving environment for my team and one that encourages growth.

My mentors instilled in me the importance of humanity in all that we do. I have taken this with me throughout my career and find it increasingly important to provide a focused and stable environment for my team to feel supported in all that they do.

## WL: How do you think your colleagues and team would describe you as a leader?

**Dr. Kerr:** Resilient.

I build and lead the research and development (R&D) team at Merz Aesthetics, which spearheads the growth of the pipeline. With more than 200 our dedicated employees around the world who support our R&D, I have learned a great deal about what it means to be a leader.

I think my team would describe me as supportive and resilient, as they are, too. Together, we have been challenged many times, and each time we have risen to the occasion. We face challenges head-on and together find inventive ways to progress our pipeline, even during the pandemic. Navigating through these experiences has taught me that resilience is powerful and necessary when leading a team.

## WL: What advice can you offer women who are rising stars in medical aesthetics?

**Dr. Kerr:** My advice for women who are pursuing a career in medical aesthetics is to be their most authentic selves and to pursue opportunities that they enjoy and that enrich their lives. I would encourage them to establish a strong network of others who can support and mentor them. As women, we need to empower each other and push for equality in the workplace, especially in the STEM [science, technology, engineering, and mathematics] fields.

As women, we need to drown out the negative noise of others and be confident in our own voices. We need to stop apologizing for who we are, and we will grow stronger together.

## WL: What are your pet causes?

**Dr. Kerr:** Women in STEM, equal rights, and helping humanity.

I emphasize the importance of equality and humanity in all that I do and work every day to pave the way for the next generation of scientists. Ultimately, my goal is to provide guidance and support for others in the life sciences industry.

Throughout my education and career, the mentors whom I have surrounded myself with helped me build up the courage and strength that I needed to keep moving forward. My ambition for the future is to return the favor and to continue to mentor others within the field and be able to provide them with the necessary tools, knowledge, and skills to succeed. I am grateful for the opportunity I have at Merz Aesthetics to be in a position in which I can make a true impact and support these causes in my everyday work. ■