

ATVB Named Lecture Reviews—Insight Into Author



ATVB Named Lecture Reviews—2016 ATVB Plenary Lecture

**Insight Into the Author: Ann Marie Schmidt, MD,
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Why did you choose the profession of scientific investigation?

I began my career as a physician in training, and during that time, I was fortunate to have an opportunity to pursue scientific research in vascular biology. That time in my life was transformative, as my love of science and life path became very clear from those experiences. Our discovery of RAGE opened up new doors to study mechanisms of diabetes and its complications. Shortly after the publication of those first studies on RAGE, our discovery that RAGE was a multiligand receptor, with implications for inflammation, obesity, cancer and neurodegeneration, greatly expanded our view of this molecule and paved the road to multiple exciting scientific directions probing RAGE's role in homeostasis and chronic disease by our lab and many others.

What have been important influences on your professional life?

The most important influences on my professional life derived from the years I spent in clinical training. Although quantitatively they were few, and many years ago, their lasting influence on my scientific mission has endured throughout my life's work. I recall with great clarity my many patients at Bellevue Hospital suffering from the complications of diabetes or the ravages of aging. Those experiences created a lasting impression on me that stimulate me to steadfastly continue scientific investigation.

What wisdom do you impart on new investigators?

In 2012, our laboratory mice and nearly all our resources were destroyed by Superstorm Sandy. Although it has taken many years to recover, the experience has reinforced for me that our commitment to our work is deep and unchangeable. This experience and realization have made it very easy to impart advice to new investigators. Simply stated, I advise them to never give up and to continue to pursue their aspirations in scientific investigation, as bumps in the road are merely opportunities to be better and to grow.

Which direction do you envisage your science taking?

One of the most critical next steps for our work is to advance our small molecule RAGE antagonist project. A major frustration for me as an academic scientist has been the "ups and downs" of translating the RAGE biology to clinical trials and, possibly, medicines for patients beset with RAGE-related diseases. Recent opportunities to carry out this work directly in our laboratory, and with exceptional collaborators, provide, for the first time, a pathway for us to translate our scientific discoveries in mice to possible treatments for human beings.

What are your nonscientific activities?

My major nonscientific activity and hobby is reading—particularly works of fiction. I always enjoyed writing courses in high school and college, and I truly believe that being an avid reader helps one to be both a better writer and a more empathetic person. Often, fiction is based on themes of conflict, struggle, and resolution. Important life lessons are deduced from reading fiction and helpful for personal growth.

What are your favorite books, movies, music (pick one or all)?

My favorite author is Ramona Ausubel. I am ever in awe of her creative prose and her ability to probe so uniquely and imaginatively such divergent processes as birth, loss, and death, as examples. I eagerly await her next work.

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