

Baseball's Loss is Stem Cell Agency's Gain as Stanford's Linda Boxer Appointed to CIRM Board

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June 12, 2017 Oakland, CA Linda Boxer, M.D., Ph.D., vice dean of the School of Medicine at Stanford University, has been appointed to the governing Board of the California Institute for Regenerative Medicine (CIRM), the state's stem cell agency.

State Controller Betty T. Yee made the appointment saying Dr. Boxer brings more than a quarter of a century of experience working on blood cancers, as both a researcher and teacher, and will "put her talents to work in support of the institute's critical mission."

"I am excited to be able to play a role in bringing stem cell treatments to patients with serious diseases," says Dr. Boxer. "California has become a leader in stem cell and regenerative medicine thanks to the foresight of its citizens and to CIRM."

Dr. Boxer is a familiar face at CIRM, having served as an alternate on the Board for Dr. Lloyd Minor, the dean of the Stanford School of Medicine.

"We are delighted to have Linda join us on the Board as the official representative from Stanford," says Jonathan Thomas, Ph.D., J.D., Chair of the CIRM Board. "Over the last few years we have gotten to know her very well and value her experience, expertise and her commitment to the work that we do. Lloyd Minor is a hard act to follow, but Linda does it admirably."

Dr. Boxer has a long history with Stanford, earning both her medical degree and her Ph.D. in biophysics there. She became a professor of hematology, then chief of the Division of Hematology, and senior vice chair of the Department of Medicine before becoming the vice dean of the School of Medicine.

Dr. Boxer says science was not her first choice for a career.

"The first career choice that I recall as a young child was professional baseball—growing up in Minnesota, I was a huge Twins fan—I did learn fairly quickly that this was not likely to be a career that was available for a girl, and it wasn't clear what one did after that career ended at a relatively young age."

Fortunately for us she turned to science after getting a chemistry set as a gift for her birthday.

"I was amazed at what happened when different chemicals were mixed together: color changes, precipitates forming, gas bubbles, explosions (small ones, of course). Then when we studied biology in middle school, I was fascinated by what one could observe with a microscope and became very interested in trying to understand how living organisms work."

Although she specializes in blood cancers she says at first she was reluctant to work in cancer, because it is such a difficult disease to treat and the thought of losing so many patients was hard to bear. Now, she says the intensity of the relationships she has developed with patients makes the work all the more rewarding.

Dr. Boxer says throughout her career she has been fortunate to have good mentors, people who have helped guide and shape her career. She now tries to play the same role for others.

"One of the aspects of my role now that I enjoy the most is mentoring junior faculty and trainees. I don't think one can have too many mentors—different mentors can help with different aspects of one's life and career. I think it is very important for established scientists to give back and to help develop the next generation of physicians and scientists."

About CIRM

At CIRM, we never forget that we were created by the people of California to accelerate stem cell treatments to patients with unmet medical needs, and act with a sense of urgency to succeed in that mission.

To meet this challenge, our team of highly trained and experienced professionals actively partners with both academia and industry in a hands-on, entrepreneurial environment to fast track the development of today's most promising stem cell technologies.

With \$3 billion in funding and approximately 300 active stem cell programs in our portfolio, CIRM is the world's largest institution dedicated to helping people by bringing the future of cellular medicine closer to reality.

For more information, go to www.cirm.ca.gov

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