



Dear Colleagues,

I am pleased to include another issue of RFS Briefings with some timely and encouraging updates on women in science.

Of note in particular:

**With profound sadness, we mourn the recent death of RFS Board Member Professor Ben Barres.** Ben Barres, a neuroscientist who conducted pioneering work on brain cells known as glia and their possible relation to diseases like Parkinson's and who was an outspoken advocate of equal opportunity for women in the sciences, died on December 27, 2017. Please also see three major pieces of coverage below regarding Ben Barres' accomplishments.

**National Institutes of Health Highlights**, nih.gov, Nov/Dec 2017

*Advances & Insights: The NIH Women in Science Newsletter* featured an article about the *Journal of Women's Health* themed issue on gender equity in faculty health careers (May 2017). The Journal is published by Mary Ann Liebert, Inc., whose founder and president (of the same name) is also the founder and executive vice president of the Rosalind Franklin Society. The issue was developed "thanks to the efforts of" the Research Partnership on Women in Biomedical Careers – "a grassroots group aimed at closing the gender gap in biomedical research." The Newsletter focuses on those articles written by members of the Research Partnership and NIH staff. [Read more.](#)

**See below for more news about women in science**

Please continue to share important news and opportunities with us so that we may share it with you, and others who are committed to supporting the careers of exceptional women in science.

With regards,



Karla Shepard Rubinger  
Executive Director  
*Rosalind Franklin Society*

## RFS Briefings

January 2018

### **Ben Barres Coverage:**

**Ben Barres, Neuroscientist and Equal-Opportunity Advocate, Dies at 63,**  
nytimes.com, December 29, 2017

Ben Barres, a neuroscientist who conducted pioneering work on brain cells known as glia and their possible relation to diseases like Parkinson's, and who was an outspoken advocate of equal opportunity for women in the sciences, died. Having transitioned from female to male in 1997, Dr. Barres had a unique perspective on the difficulties that women and minorities face in the sciences.

[Read more.](#)

**Glia Guru,** the-scientist.com, May 1, 2017

As a college freshman at MIT in the early 1970s, Ben Barres – then Barbara – had his first encounter with sexism. Twenty-five years later, Ben transitioned from female to male. Obstacles never obstructed his career and his personal ability to focus and, later, conduct groundbreaking research on glial cells. [Read more.](#)

**A Towering Legacy of Goodness: Ben Barres' Fight for Diversity in Science,**  
washingtonpost.com, December 28, 2017

Neuroscientist Ben Barres had a unique perspective on life, having looked through a lens as both a woman and a man. He was a true champion of diversity and would often reflect on his life, living as Barbara, to give him insight into the vast differences men and women encounter on a daily basis. [Read more.](#)

**Mathilde Krim, scientist turned activist who helped strip AIDS of stigma, dies at 91,**  
washingtonpost.com, January 18, 2018

Mathilde Krim, a geneticist and virologist, died on January 15. Dr. Krim, known as the "Interferon Queen," bridged the worlds of laboratory science and political activism to

strip AIDS of stigma and raise awareness of its treatment. She was researching the possible treatment of leukemia when, in 1980, she and a colleague began testing blood samples in gay men with enlarged lymph nodes and spleens but tested negative for leukemia. These patients started to die, marking some of the first reported deaths of AIDS, a now global health crisis. Dr. Krim worked to dispel the misconception that the disease affected patients of a certain sexual orientation and/or social status and she co-founded the AIDS Medical Foundation in New York in 1983. "She saw that AIDS would demand the intellectual resources of the fields of medicine, basic science and public health," said the late Allan Rosenfield. [Read more.](#)

**Pioneering HIV Researcher Mathilde Krim Remembered For Her Activism**, npr.org, January 17, 2018

With the death of biologist Mathilde Krim on January 15, the world lost a pioneering scientist, activist and fundraiser in AIDS research. Her clarity, compassion and leadership have inspired countless people. During the HIV epidemic's beginning stages in the 1980s, Dr. Krim used science and transparency to dispel the stigma and misinformation associated with the disease. "She has likely literally saved hundreds of thousands if not millions of lives because of what she did during the initial days and years of the epidemic," says Corey Johnson, speaker of the New York City Council. Dr. Krim not only researched the disease and its treatments and co-founded the AIDS Medical Foundation in New York, but she also fought tirelessly for laws to ban discrimination in housing, employment, and medical care. [Read more.](#)

**Fight Climate Change, One Laundry Load a Time**, nytimes.com, January 1, 2018

In the pursuit for a more environmentally friendly detergent, two scientists at Novozymes are enlisting a secret weapon, which can be found in a dormant forest outside of Copenhagen. And what is the secret weapon? Oyster mushrooms. By studying the enzymes that speed up chemical reactions or natural processes like decay, they are helping the company develop an enzyme for energy saving laundry and dishwasher detergents. Dr. Debbie Yaver, managing director of Novozymes, was presented with the [2014 BIO Rosalind Franklin Award for Leadership](#). [Read more.](#)

**When Will We Stop Elevating Predators?**, chronicle.com, January 1, 2018

On November 30, 2017, Dr. Karen Kelsky, founder and president of The Professor is In, distributed an anonymous Sexual Harassment Survey, which quickly went viral and generated more than 1,800 responses from academics who shared their experiences of sexual misconduct. Her goal for this survey? Not to execute a research study but rather to make visible the alarmingly high scale of sexual harassment in the academic world and raise awareness. The survey revealed a distributing range of attacks of senior men on junior women – especially women of color. "Academic culture gives powerful older men access to, and almost total power over, vulnerable younger women," Kelsky writes. [Read more.](#)

**NYU's Newest Silver Professors**

Five women were among the six recipients of the New York University Silver Professorship. A reception will be held in March 2018 to formally induct and celebrate these extraordinary professors.

**Space Science Work Recognised in New Year Honours**, [bbc.com](http://bbc.com), December 29, 2017

A professor of Space Physics at Imperial, Michele Dougherty was a key member of the Cassini mission over the 20 years since it launched in 1997 and was recognized in the New Year Honours list. Additionally, Helen Sharman, the first Briton in space, joins the Order of St Michael and St George for services to education in science and technology. Professor Karen Holford, the deputy vice chancellor of Cardiff University, was also recognized for services to engineering and for the advancement of women in science and engineering. [Read more](#)

**More Women than Men Enrolled in US Med Schools for First Time**, [Medscape.com](http://Medscape.com), December 19, 2017

According to new data released by the Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC), women made up 50.7% of the 21,338 new enrollees in 2017 compared with 49.8% in 2016. "This year's matriculating class demonstrates that medicine is an increasingly attractive career for women and that medical schools are creating an inclusive environment. While we have much more work to do to attain broader diversity among our students, faculty, and leadership, this is a notable milestone," said AAMC President and Chief Executive Officer Dr. Darrell G. Kirch. [Read more](#).

**To Unlock the Brain's Mysteries, Purée It**, [nytimes.com](http://nytimes.com), December 14, 2017

In the last 12 years, Suzanaerculano-Houzel, now a researcher and professor at Vanderbilt University, has acquired the brains of more than 130 species – ranging from mice, squirrels, pigeons, kangaroos, elephants, and more. Her comparative studies and innovative techniques have disputed the old myths about the human brain, such as how humans use only 10 percent of their brains, as well as how brains are constructed. Her first step to disproving the myths? She had to determine exactly how many neurons the brain actually contains. And, she did this by pureeing the brain specimens. [Read more](#).

**Those who Broke Silence on Sexual Harassment are TIMES's Person of the Year**, [time.com](http://time.com), December 8, 2017

Sexual harassment doesn't discriminate. It doesn't only affect those from one income-class, race, gender, age, religion, or geographic area. Its reach is far, but those who have felt its wrath are empowered to speak up and say #MeToo. TIME honors this collective group – the Silence Breakers – as the magazine's Person of the Year. The women (and men) who have spoken up are "part of a movement that has no formal name. But now they have a voice. [Read more](#).

**Nobel Laureates say Change is Coming for Women in Sciences**, [wpix.com](http://wpix.com), December 7, 2017

After the seven winners of the 2017 Nobel Prize in Physics, Chemistry and Economic Sciences were all white men, a group of 2017 Nobel Laureates have addressed the lack

of female representation in sciences. The winners are recognizing the increase in the number of women in science who are making ground-breaking discoveries in their fields. "Change is coming, but there is a long delay between entering freshman and the Nobel prize," says Physicist Kip Thorne, who noted an increase in the number of women entering undergraduate programs in sciences today compared to when he was a student. [Read more.](#)

**Mobile Genetic Elements and Genome Plasticity**, keystone-symposia.org, December 2017

The Mobile Genetic Elements and Genome Plasticity conference will take place February 11-15, 2018 in Santa Fe, New Mexico. Lynne E. Maquat is one of the organizers and is a CIA member. Conference attendees can network, hear from experts in the field and more. [Read more.](#)

**Plant Geneticist Sparkles at Breakthrough Prize Ceremony**, wired.com, December 8, 2017

Plant geneticist Joanne Chory, of the Salk Institute for Biological Studies and Howard Hughes Medical Institute, was the only female awardee at the prize ceremony on December 3. Her work has greatly contributed to the identification of plant hormones. "I'm trying to do something now for humankind, not just to please by brain or follow a scientific curiosity. I don't want to leave a crappy planet as my legacy," Chory says. [Read more.](#)

**At Columbia, Three Women, 30 Years and a Pattern of Harassment**, nytimes.com, December 7, 2017

Three women who attended Columbia University have spoken up about being sexually harassed by their professor and their stories are eerily similar; the difference is the decade in which the harassment occurred. Lack of policies at the University enabled the professor's behavior and their stories shed light on the changing views in academia. "Universities do not exist apart from the widespread re-examination of workplace conduct that has dominated so much of the nation's attention in recent weeks," says a Columbia University spokeswoman. [Read more.](#)

**Being a Doctor is Hard. It's Harder for Women**, nytimes.com, December 7, 2017

In a new study in *JAMA Internal Medicine*, Dr. Constance Guille and colleagues analyzed the mental health of more than 3,100 new doctors at 44 hospitals across the country. While both genders experienced a sharp rise in depression scores after six months on the job, the effect was much higher for women. Why? Work-family conflicts. Female physicians continue to assume the majority of household and child care duties while working in a physically and emotionally demanding field. And, female physicians must also combat the daily struggles of gender bias and inequality in the workplace. [Read more.](#)

**Breakthrough Prize – "The Oscars of Science" – Celebrates Top Achievements in Physics, Life Sciences & Mathematics, Awards \$22 Million in Prizes**,

Breakthroughprize.org, December 6, 2017

Joanne Chory, of the Salk Institute for Biological Studies and Howard Hughes Medical Institute, was awarded the Breakthrough Prize in Life Sciences for discovering the molecular mechanisms by which plants extract information from light and shade to modify their programs of shoot and leaf growth in the photosynthetic harvest of light. She is the only woman to be awarded the \$3 million prize. [Read more.](#)

**From Ancient Myths to Modern Day, Women and the Struggle for Power,**

nytimes.com, December 5, 2017

In her book, Mary Beard looks at how public speech has always been a defining quality of being male and how women have always been silenced. Not much has changed from the ancient world – from sexism to harassment to inequality – and her powerful book takes an in depth look at the histories of oppression while offering a solution. “You cannot easily fit women into a structure that is already coded as male; you have to change the structure,” she writes. [Read more.](#)

**Lost Einsteins: The Innovations We’re Missing,** nytimes.com, December 3, 2017

How many revolutionary advances has the world missed out on because of inequality? For a number of years, Raj Chetty, a Stanford professor who helps lead the Equality of Opportunity Project, and his colleagues, have analyzed millions of anonymous tax records and taken a detailed look at who becomes an inventor and who doesn’t. Gaps in income, race, and gender are effectively halting potential creators to create. [Read more.](#)

**After Witnessing Illness in India, She Seeks Ways to Fight It,** nytimes.com, October 27, 2017

While walking to grade school in India, Dr. Thirumala-Devi Kanneganti would see people with different diseases abandoned by their families and she knew she wanted to help. The first in her family to graduate high school, she has dedicated her life to learning more about why some people get diseases and why others don’t. She is currently an immunologist at St. Jude Children’s Research Hospital in Memphis where she studies mammalian cells to see why some resist disease and others are highly susceptible. [Read more.](#)