



NIMBUS

THERAPEUTICS

2012 Women to Watch: Rosana Kapeller

By [Patricia Resende](#) ([Mass High Tech](#))

April 20, 2012 – Rosana Kapeller has always had the entrepreneurial bug and a love for science. While most of Kapeller’s family members believed she would join the high-powered family’s media business in her native Brazil, Kapeller had a different plan. With her MD in hand, she left Brazil to get her Ph.D. and join her husband-to-be Towia Libermann in Boston. She forged ahead in her role as scientist at Millennium Pharmaceuticals to director of its molecular and cellular biology department before co-founding Ailerion Therapeutics where she helped raise \$60M million in capital. With support from her family in the Bay State and Brazil, the mother of three and chief scientific officer at Nimbus Discovery continues to balance her love for family and Brazilian culture with business and science.

Education: Kapeller started her post-secondary education at Faculdade de Ciencias Medicas de Universidade do Estado do Rio de Janeiro and graduated with a M.D. She left Brazil in 1987 to attend Tufts University Medical School, where she earned a Ph.D. in molecular and cellular physiology.

On her path to science: “I grew up in a family of publishers and journalists and there were few people in the family that stepped out to be a doctor. My interest was in bringing basic science and novel therapeutics to patients and I knew I couldn’t do that in Brazil.”

Mentor: “I had a ton of support from my family. My great uncle was the driving force of our business in Brazil. He was bigger than life and had a very big impact on my life. My dad is my biggest fan and supporter. We talk every day. He Skypes and FaceTime’s me.” Kapeller visits with her biggest fan on her during her annual trips to Brazil with her family each year.

Advice for women in technology: “One of the biggest challenges for women in science is they are never heard. When a women has an idea everyone nods to be polite. It sounds like a joke, but it is very real. They have ideas and solutions and get frustrated when others don’t see the value of it. I tell women to take ownership and teach them how to toot their own horn without being perceived as a witch.”

On finding balance: Something has to give in order to find work/life balance. “Women have what I like to call superwoman syndrome. They want to do everything perfect. They want to be head of the company, head of the PTO and have a neat and clean home, but they are not willing to accept help. The only reason I could do it was I always had a full-time nanny.”

Proudest accomplishment(s): Without a doubt, Kapeller said her biggest accomplishments in life are her children. “My son Allon, 20, daughter Dana, 18, and son Noah, 11.”

Biggest challenge: “My biggest challenge is the culture. It’s about Brazilian culture being an inclusive, friendly culture. Brazilians have a sense of authority. I’d be outspoken and blunt and nobody could really appreciate that. In meetings, I’d challenge the head of the company. That got me in trouble many times, but I’ve learned my lesson. Here you can’t do that you have to be polite and politically correct.”

Favorite device/gadget: “My iPad. I was at a meeting and I did everything with my iPad. It was like Star Trek.”

Bruce Booth, board member at Nimbus Discovery and partner at Atlas Ventures

“Rosana has already proven in her career that she is a results-driven leader. She genuinely cares about making a difference in this world and it shows in both her work and in the way she treats and respects those she works with.”

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