

Glyciome's Dr. Joanna Ellington Named 2026 Seattle AWIS Award Winner for Science Advancement and Leadership

Spokane biotechnology leader honored for four decades of innovation in reproductive medicine and sustained mentorship of women in STEM

SPOKANE, WA, UNITED STATES, February 27, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The Seattle Chapter of the Association for Women in Science ([AWIS](#)) has named Dr. Joanna Ellington, DVM, PhD, DACT, co-founder & CEO of [Glyciome](#), as the recipient of the 2026 Seattle AWIS Award for Science Advancement and Leadership. She will be honored at the chapter's annual banquet June 16th at the University of Washington campus in Seattle.

“

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Dr. Ellington

“I am deeply honored to be recognized by the AWIS, as an organization that advances the careers of women in

science and technology,” said Dr. Ellington. As the first winner of this award from Spokane, WA, Dr. Ellington's recognition showcases the region's growing bioscience community undergirded by the Evergreen Bioscience Innovation Cluster, Greater Spokane, Inc and the Health Sciences & Services Authority.

The award recognizes a woman whose innovations have advanced science and whose leadership has benefited the STEM community. Founded in 1985 by graduate students at the University of Washington, the AWIS creates a broad, interdisciplinary environment for advancement of women in science and technology.

Dr. Ellington's career spans 40 years as a leader in both reproductive medicine and entrepreneurial, translational biotechnology across her three successful start-ups. She earned her Doctor of Veterinary Medicine in 1984, becoming one of the first women to practice large animal medicine in Washington. She then studied Reproductive Physiology at Cornell University where her PhD studies helped define modern culture media used in human fertility medicine.

Subsequent NIH-funded research at Washington State University-Spokane allowed her to identify defects in human sperm that impact Fallopian tube storage, resulting in male-factor

infertility. This work was showcased in the documentary “The Great Sperm Race”. Her invention of Pre-Seed® Fertility Lubricant resulted in a new FDA device category for sperm-safe lubricants and eliminated misleading “non-spermicidal” labeling of products that killed sperm at rates equivalent to contraceptive gels.

Dr. Ellington has authored numerous break-through medical publications. She holds 25 issued patents and is recognized for changing clinical paradigms and informing public awareness around fertility issues – including previously unseen patients in low resource settings. She has been awarded the international Young Andrologist Award from the American Society of Andrology and the Distinguished Alumni Award from the University of Tennessee. She now leads her company in National Cancer Institute funded research to reduce genital infections that lead to cancers (e.g., cervical, penile) and sales of their patented, prebiotic [Wild & Pure®](#) personal care brand, which previously won the Idaho Innovative Consumer Product of the Year.

“My career has been shaped by mentors including a central inspiration in women’s health, Dr. Raina Fichorova at Harvard/BWH, and NIH Program Officers Dr. Vogel, who led me through motherhood and science, and Dr. Zhao, who guided us through changing funding environments. These individuals opened my emails and returned my calls, allowing me to succeed,” says Dr. Ellington. “Both our state’s Commerce Department and the Life Science Washington teams have been critical to my success. And support from the Spokane business community has been exceptional, opening doors for collaboration and creating an environment where research dollars can go further. This allowed my innovations to change global health in ways I never could have imagined as a young girl who, after the death of my first mare at age 12, just wanted to learn how to save the life of a horse.”

AWIS envisions women of all ages being actively supported in STEM for the benefit of all. Dr. Ellington’s career embodies that vision, pairing compassion with technological advancement and inclusive leadership. She has mentored hundreds of students from high school through professional degrees, often creating paid research roles that she funds herself, to ensure young people can pursue STEM careers. As she states, “My commitment to mentorship reaches beyond healthcare and life sciences. Whether it is that farm boy passed over for AP classes or a talented black pre-med woman whose application doesn’t gain traction, the greatest gift of my career is seeing the people I’ve mentored make their impact across the many disciplines of STEM.”



Dr. Joanna Ellington, DVM, PhD, President & CEO of Glyciome, and recipient of the 2026 Seattle AWIS Award for Science or Technology Advancement and Leadership.

About Glyciome

Glyciome is a women-owned biotechnology company based in Spokane WA focused on advancing disruptive innovations in genital health, to reduce global cancer burdens.

About Wild & Pure

Wild & Pure is a science-first personal care brand founded by Drs. Ellington and Clifton. Built on prebiotic, rinse-optional formulations and a "do no harm" philosophy, Wild & Pure products are designed to support surface health while reducing environmental impact.

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