

Women in BioSciences- Walking with a purpose

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Climbing the ladder with continuous learning- Ms Bhavani Sivalingam, Head of R&D Solutions, APAC, IQVIA, Singapore



Bhavani Sivalingam has more than two decades' experience in clinical research, including 20 years with IQVIA (then Quintiles), where she has held roles of increasing responsibility across the region.

Today, Bhavani is a pioneer member of the IQVIA Asia Pacific team and has played a key role in the company's growth in the region. Since 1993, IQVIA (then Quintiles) has expanded its clinical operations from a few hundred employees in Asia

Pacific to become the region's largest provider of R&D Solutions and market access services, with 14,000 employees operating from more than 30 locations across Asia Pacific.

In her current role, Bhavani leads the R&D function for IQVIA in Asia – which includes clinical operations, clinical Global Functional Resourcing (GFR), customer alliances and quality management – all focused on efficient, high-quality delivery of product development services for IQVIA clients in Asia Pacific.

Nearly, 20 years ago Bhavani had joined IQVIA as a Project Manager. Speaking about her early days with IQVIA, Bhavani, says, "My job now as IQVIA's head of R&D Solutions in Asia Pacific is much different than when I was a project manager 20 years ago. At that time Quintiles (now IQVIA) had just opened its first office in Singapore. I had studied science and I wanted to work with people. My first job combined both – perfect! My expectations today really haven't changed – but the scale is much larger. I've always enjoyed orchestrating work to accomplish a goal. I did that starting out as a project manager, then working with our key customers, and now as head of IQVIA R&D Solutions in Asia. I'm excited about prospects for change – now more than ever because of advances in science, medicine and technology."

Bhavani has extensive experience in cardiology, oncology and infectious diseases, and vaccine studies. Prior to her current role, Bhavani was head of IQVIA's strategic alliances for Asia Pacific.

She adds that her career path has been guided more by her interests than a master plan. "I didn't actively plan how I was going to climb the career ladder but instead focused on following my passion and continuously learning from each experience. One thread that runs through my career and our company is continuous improvement, especially in quality. It's helped differentiate our company and drive our growth in Asia and globally. Vaccines development is another intersection between my passion and my work. I started out working on vaccines trials. I've seen Asia Pacific become a leading region for vaccine development. The value of these vaccines is enormous in terms of reducing suffering, controlling outbreaks and eradicating virulent strains."

Sharing her experiences in the industry, Bhavani says that clinical trial industry is constantly evolving providing both challenges and opportunities. "Changing dynamics of the industry is a challenge, however, it also provides lot of opportunities. Advances in technology, analytics and 'big data' are creating opportunities to revolutionize how clinical research is done. I'm excited about what IQVIA has achieved in delivering 'Next Generation Clinical Development' to clients. We're just at the start of what I think will be a healthcare revolution driven by data, technology and medical and scientific advances."

Speaking on gender parity in the industry, Bhavani said gender parity begins with education and giving girls equal opportunities in science, technology, engineering and math. "Professional confidence is not gender-based; it's all about authenticity and developing the qualities that resonate with who you are. Governments and companies can do their part of encouraging and supporting women who want to pursue a career in the life sciences. We've come a long way but there's much more to be done."