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Do not give up, Be professional and Believe in Your Own Abilities #Women's Day 2020

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In conversation with Ms Yvonne Lungershausen, CEO, Avance Clinical (Adelaide-based CRO), Australia to applaud her inspiring journey through Healthcare industries in Asia



International Women's Day 2020 embracing the world with its new campaign**#EachForEqual,** aiming to draw attention to the difference each woman can bring out. Gender equality is essential for economies and communities to thrive. The campaign is expected to bring about change by raising awareness of bias and calling out inequality and to cheer women's achievement. Asian Women have always pioneered in the healthcare sector with venturesome women heading the most influential positions in the different domains of health and medicine. Biospectrum Asia has always been mesmerized by our courageous women leaders in the healthcare industry and is celebrating this women's day with one such spectacular achiever**Ms Yvonne Lungershausen, CEO, Avance Clinical (Adelaide-based CRO), Australia.**

Ms Yvonne is profoundly exploring her knowledge and immense experience as CEO of an Australian CRO since 2019. Avance has a growing reputation in the US as a nimble experienced team that delivers trials in the Asia Pacific. Yvonne had been in senior clinical roles at Avance, and the investors behind the company decided she had the right mix of CRO and bioanalytics experience to take the company to global level.

Ms Yvonne with her persistence, hard work and talent ensure her biotech clients' needs to deliver supreme clinical trial CRO services. Along with her tremendous classical research from prestigious CSIRO, in 1999 Yvonne and colleague Jane Kelly conducted the first Phase 1 first-in-human study of a new chemical entity in Australia. Their knowledge and processes went

into setting-up what are now the 5 leading Phase I facilities in Australia.

Yvonne is also known for her role in launching Australia's Phase I research sector and her own ResearchGate profile proudly celebrates her achievements.

On this special occasion of Women's Day **Ms Yvonne Lungershausen** gracefully shared her views and journey with Biopsectrum Asia to inspire millions of women in the healthcare industry.

- **What is your opinion on the lower percentage of women leaders in the Life sciences industry?**

I don't believe that companies should preferentially put women in leadership roles to address gender equality. People should be in roles based on merit, competence and skills. However, I do believe that women are not being equally considered or developed to allow them to reach their potential and this is an area that requires considerable attention. Men and women think differently and often view situations differently so it is important for employers to recognize this as an asset, and for women to know when they have what it takes to be considered for senior roles.

I know it is a cliché but it actually happened to me! At another company, I was the only woman executive in a board meeting and was rather surprised to be asked to make a cup of tea by a board member!

- **Are the industries designating women to certain presumed gender-based positions in the companies?**

This could be the case because people still often think of a woman having historically done these roles well so women continue to be pigeonholed. Things are changing rapidly. Women are increasingly moving into different and diverse roles and excelling. I also think women can often bring value to the non-tangible elements of a company like corporate culture, integrity, resilience and respect which are vital for a successful company – but are often not as measurable or highly regarded as the financials.

- **Share your experience as an achiever in the Life Science industry and how you excelled to reach your goals.**

I started my career in pure research on the bench in universities and the prestigious CSIRO – so I have a ResearchGate profile and really get what our biotech clients need when it comes to clinical trial CRO services. Throughout my career I have had strong male and female mentors which I believe is key to success. I have also successfully partnered with female executives to bring about real change in the industry. In 1999 myself and colleague Jane Kelly literally launched the Phase I industry in Australia with the first Phase 1 first-in-human study of a new chemical entity. Our knowledge and processes went into setting-up what are now the 5 leading Phase I facilities in Australia.

I set my priorities, remained persistent and backed myself in my belief in my own potential. It can be difficult to be heard in a male-dominated environment I believe largely because men and women hear things differently. If I found myself not being heard or able to get my message across I learnt to try to say things in a different way and if that failed just say things louder! I also was strongly supported by my network of colleagues inside and outside the business.

When I was appointed CEO of Avance Clinical in 2019 I had been in senior clinical roles with the company for more than 8 years, and our investors decided I had the right mix of CRO and research experience to take the company global.

I am extremely fortunate that I have a BoD that is encouraging and supportive and we have a clear vision for the company.

- **What would be your suggestion to encourage women towards leadership roles and how a prolonged change can be achieved**?

I would advise women not to give up, always be professional and believe in your own abilities that you can do the job – you don't need to be more qualified than a man. Having support from mentors is extremely helpful and allows women a platform to develop their ambitions. A prolonged change can only be achieved by recognising that there is still a gap and that women should not be overlooked even if they are not actively putting themselves forward. Development programs are helpful in providing forums for women to share experiences and get guidance on tools they can put in their tool kits to overcome

obstacles they may be facing in their organisations. Talented women should be encouraged to attend these to build their confidence. Groups do provide forums for women to attend to challenge them to ask for the next step, an example of this is Ausbiotech who host an annual Women in Life Sciences Luncheon. I suggest these forums are a good place to start. I do remember early in my career being selected for a leadership role at CSIRO and sent to Canberra for mentoring and coaching. This was a powerful moment for me and really gave me extra drive and confidence to achieve.

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