

"Knowing your strengths, uniqueness and weaknesses drives success" #Women'sDay2020

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In conversation with Dr Su-Peung Ng, Global Medical Head, Sanofi Pasteur, Singapore 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 **Dr Su-Peung Ng, Global Medical Head, Sanofi Pasteur, Singapore.**

Dr Su-Peung Ng has excelled in the healthcare industry with a cocktail of strategic vision, broad knowledge and experience across the pharmaceutical value chain, innovation, creativity, resilience and an ability to translate ideas into solutions in the health and life sciences environment. She leads a multi-national team of over 450 dedicated people in Sanofi Pasteur with medical, pharmaceutical and scientific expertise to help secure life-saving vaccines to over 500 million people around the world each year.

Dr Su-Peung Ng, a Medical doctor with an MBA has served healthcare, management consulting and medical executive leadership in the pharmaceutical industries for more than two decades. Her leadership journey has taken her from Australia to Belgium, France and Singapore.

Mother of 2 teenage boys is a complete woman balancing her dedication between professional and family life. She is passionate about bringing the best in people and harnessing the power of diversity in the service of ethical and sustainable health and societal impact.

In Dr Su-Peung's words, "women globally and in Asia, are primarily the decision-makers on health-related matters in a

household. Just as we strive to reduce disparities in access to education and healthcare for Asian women, we have to strive for equal opportunities for leadership roles in the healthcare industry. Making gender-balance in the healthcare industry a reality would help foster innovation, growth opportunities and ensure sustainability to address the health challenges we face in society“.

On this special occasion of Women’s Day, **Dr Su-Peing Ng** gracefully shared her views and journey with **BioSpectrum Asia** to inspire millions of women in healthcare.

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

Although there is greater awareness of the importance of gender diversity, we need to continue striving for the right balance with women in leadership roles within the healthcare arena. Women represent 50% of the society we operate in and are often the primary health decision-makers. In order to achieve improved health outcomes, we have to ensure leadership in the Life Sciences industry are truly representative of the societies we operate in. The good news is that most companies have recognized the need to improve diversity in leadership – Companies with 50% of women in senior operating roles achieve 19% higher rates of return on equity (ROE) on average. A culture that promotes diversity and inclusiveness is a key driver for innovation and also ensures a more sustainable value proposition for people to join and stay. This is essential for the success of the life sciences industry.

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

Gender gaps in society remain a major barrier in the world today impeding social advancement and hampering economic growth. This is not limited to the life sciences industry.

Becoming a gender-balanced company is part of what we want Sanofi to be in the future and is a strong performance-driver. It can be achieved by engraining gender parity in our culture, our values and our strategy. For instance, metrics may indeed show that it is easier to achieve gender balance in certain functions, like HR. However, we can then take learnings from where gender balance is strong to implement strategies to secure diversity at all levels of the organization across all functions from entry to middle management to ensure a diverse pipeline for leadership roles.

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

The role of Medical in the industry has evolved significantly over the last decades. In the past, the medical function was seen more as a support function, providing important medical expertise, yet operating more like internal consultants, or a compliance organization providing checks and balances for regulatory purposes.

From the time that I started working as a Medical functional leader in a country affiliate until today, I have been striving to lead and demonstrate that the Medical function is a strategic business partner that is a true third pillar of a pharmaceutical company – together with R&D and commercial pillars.

Whether at the country affiliate, regional or global organization, I had to identify the right levers that would balance both the needs of the external customer, internal business needs and ethical and scientific principles. I then had to ensure that my own teams had the right perspectives, competencies and skills to play this important role.

As actions speak louder than words, I found that the most important lever for success was to demonstrate and deliver on our promise. When I was able to secure the participation of the leading experts in the country to global multi-country clinical trials, I demonstrated to the experts that I had a long-term interest in sustaining the research environment locally, while also ensuring that they had first-hand experience with the performance of innovative vaccines during clinical development. Thereafter, they could also use this evidence and experience to advocate for the adoption of innovative vaccines in national immunization programs. This in turn also demonstrated to the business that as Medical I played a pivotal role in building trust and securing the guidelines and reimbursement of the company’s new vaccines.

As I started to lead larger teams at regional and global level, I had to repeat this approach but at a larger scale. Role-modeling the change became essential – and I worked with cross-functional partners who were willing to help me demonstrate what great collaboration should look like. There were of course obstacles to overcome on this journey, with some people more sceptical than others, but I overcame these by identifying the right champions to work with, building the proof points and then the momentum to make this a fundamental way of working. To sustain the change, I strive to continuously live these principles on a daily basis.

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

Knowing yourself is really key for successful career evolution. Know what makes you stronger and what holds you back. Understand what makes you unique – your talents, strengths and what you can bring to deliver the outcomes that drive the success of the business. Recognize the factors that bring out the best in you and act on those that you have control over first. Women often can be our own worst enemies with limiting beliefs that they might not have the legitimacy or be good enough. It's important to confront these limiting beliefs and not allow those inner voices to talk you out of going for a more challenging role or taking that next promotion. Build up a circle of courage with people that support you and can help you overcome your own limiting beliefs so that you dare to speak up and contribute your ideas. Leverage mentors who will be able to provide support and navigate through difficult situations.

But it works both ways as it requires commitment from the employer in enabling an environment for women leaders to thrive. At Sanofi, we are committed to act in the areas where we can have the most impact. This begins with our strong ambition to achieve equal representation of women and men among our top leaders and foster a culture of inclusion and diversity – an environment ensuring equal opportunities for the benefit of all. Some examples of what we are doing include having a platform to share success stories of female leaders, women's networks and mentorship to support career development, specific leadership development programs for high-potential female talents, providing flexible workplace solutions that support diversity, debiasing recruitment processes, ensuring an equal slate for new leadership positions and having gender balance as a performance indicator linked to bonuses at the Executive Committee level. Our ultimate objective is not to achieve awards but because we fundamentally believe this is the right thing to do for the long-term success of the business, for our employees and for society.