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ASIA EDITION

Igniting Passion and Empowering Others propels Great Leadership #Women's Day 2020

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In conversation with Dr Low Yen Ling, Divisional Vice President of Scientific & Medical Affairs, Abbott (the first female to helm the company's regional nutrition R&D centre) to applaud her inspiring journey through APAC Healthcare industries



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 Low Yen Ling, Divisional Vice President of Scientific & Medical Affairs, Abbott.**

Dr Low Yen Ling with her significant role at Abbott's nutrition R&D leads a multi-disciplinary team of more than 150 scientists, doctors, researchers and specialists across multiple countries. Most recently, she was the director of Abbott's nutrition R&D, Asia Pacific – **the first female to helm the company's regional nutrition R&D centre**, where she transformed the team into one of the most successful R&D team in the industry. Dr Low Yen has extensively served for 20 years in the field of food and nutrition, spanning government, academic and industry settings.

A Nutrition and Dietetics graduate and Honourable Doctorate in Nutrition Dr Low Yen Ling has published 40 papers in international peer-reviewed journals and is also co-author of a book chapter on "Nutrition and Early Development" in The ASPEN (American Society for Parenteral and Enteral Nutrition) Pediatric Nutrition Support Core Curriculum, 2nd Edition Text Book. She is also an adjunct assistant professor at the National University of Singapore.

On this special occasion of Women's Day, **Dr Low Yen Ling** gracefully shared her views and journey with Biopsectrum Asia to inspire millions of women in healthcare.

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

Women are still vastly underrepresented in the science fields, even up to today. There's a lack of diverse perspectives and voices creating the next life-changing technologies in our societies – a huge missed opportunity. There are probably many reasons for this. Part of it could be social pressures, but we think a big reason for this is a lack of role models for the young to follow.

At Abbott, advancing the role of women is important to our business and to the organizations and communities we work with around the world. We value diversity and there are initiatives in place such as Abbott's Women Leaders in Action (WLA) whose mission is to develop women to excel in the organization and support them to increasing levels of leadership.

We also have programs to cultivate a love for science and curiosity for STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) learning from young with students through Abbott's Young Scientists, Operations Discovery and Family Science programs.

Last year, we released a guide, "*Shaping the Future of STEM",* a detailed blueprint for successful high school internship aimed at offering young people, particularly girls experience in the STEM field. We made this public for more companies to adopt and create similar programs.

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

Like any typical Asian family, I grew up living together with my parents and grandparents. Growing up with my grandparents, I witnessed first-hand how ageing and sickness can lead to deterioration of health. Then as health worsens, it gradually eats into one's ability to live a full and enjoyable life. So, it really made me realize that health is so fundamentally important to living a fuller life.

And when I think about what the major determinants of health are, I see nutrition as a fundamental building block for health. Hence, I chose to study Nutrition and Dietetics as my first degree.

After graduation, I started my career in Public Health Nutrition, looking at how nutrition knowledge can be applied to help improve the health of the public. After three years, I decided to pursue my postgraduate studies and did my PhD in Nutrition at the University of Cambridge in UK. Upon graduation, I went into academic research to discover new scientific knowledge that will help further our understanding of how nutrition can impact health.

My greatest passion has always been in the application of science. So, after four years of academic research, I joined Abbott as an R&D scientist with the Nutrition R&D Asia-Pacific Center. This is where I can play a role to translate science into products that help nourish people, enabling them to lead healthier lives.

Joining Abbott has been a great scientific journey and a real life-changer for me. I have now been in Abbott for more than 10 years. Over the years, I have had opportunities to conduct cutting-edge research and apply the latest scientific findings into developing science-based nutrition products clinically proven to improve health so that people can live healthier and fuller lives. With Abbott in the business of helping people live fully with our life-changing technology and the latest science, it makes being an Abbott R&D Scientist every day for me exciting and fulfilling.

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

Advancing the role of women is not only important to me but ties in closely to Abbott's core values of caring, pioneering, enduring and achieving.

Growing with Abbott, I've honed my leadership living by two principles – passion and serving others.

First, you have to have passion – it's an essential part of being a great leader. When you do what you love, it shows. In my case, I have always been fascinated by science since young, especially in how science can be applied in everyday life to help improve lives. And being passionate about what I do, I'm also igniting passion in my team and people around me.

Being a servant leader is really about going in with a mindset that you are there to help others be their best selves – at work, home and in the community. As a scientist, I help bring the latest scientific knowledge to develop products to benefit the

health of consumers. Working with my team, I help guide and empower them to bring their best self to work, learn vital skills and be tenacious so they can achieve their full potential.

If we keep doing this, we can drive impact not only in the short term but in the long run, as we have been doing so in Abbott for the last 130 years.

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