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ASIA EDITION

Anuradha Rajput: Enjoy challenges to overcome them

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I received my MSc in Biochemistry in 1986, and my PhD in Biochemistry in 1992 both from the University of Mysore in India. I started my career working my way up through various hospital positions in the Department of Laboratory Medicine, starting as associate biochemist, moving on to biochemist; and then head of the Department of Biochemistry at Mallya Hospital in Bangalore.

Before Joining Icon in 2008, I was the general manager and director of a central laboratory called Clinigene International in Bangalore. There I was responsible for establishing and developing the lab and establishing it as the first laboratory in the country to be accredited by the College of American Pathologists (CAP) during 2002. I also had the privilege of getting the laboratory accredited in accordance with ISO/IEC 17025 during 2003.

I am managing director of one of Icon's global central laboratories, located in Bangalore. I have been at Icon since May 2008 and have enjoyed playing a leadership role in the laboratory's growth. As the lab in India has grown in size, so have my responsibilities. In addition to offering laboratory testing, our lab in India also provides logistics, site services, IT validation and data management solutions, including the management of local lab data through a solution we call IRIS (Icon Results Integration Service).

I started my career in a hospital diagnostic laboratory, in 2001, when clinical research was just picking up in India. I had an opportunity to move to this industry and that was the turning point in my professional life. I grew with the Industry and learned everything about clinical research.

Establishing the laboratory from the ground up has been my crowning achievement at Icon so far. In just six months with two people, we were able to identify the location, design the floor plan, select the architects, purchase equipment and hire a team-- opening our doors in November of 2008. The lab was accredited by College of American Pathologists in March 2009, just four months after opening.

Due to its fast and good paced growth, Asia has become very popular with pharmaceutical and biotechnology companies for their multinational trials in recent years. Acceptance of India as a clinical research hub by the global pharmaceutical industry has led to a plethora of business opportunities for a variety of ancillary businesses, such as contract research organizations (CROs) and central laboratories. Conducting clinical trials represents an average of 37 percent of the total cost of bringing a new drug to market. Very often the efficacy end points are based on lab data, therefore laboratory testing represents a critical step in supporting the evaluation of a new product.

Every step of a career ladder presents its unique challenges, but if you start enjoying the challenges, they no longer remain as such and then you overcome them very easily. I believe in enjoying what I do, I also try to ensure a positive work environment where people under my leadership are motivated to meet the challenges of our industry. They in turn become my strength. Creating and retaining a strong working team is the biggest challenge in today's professional life. Lastly I believe experience teaches you to remaining calm and composed during the rough times - as they always pass.

In my free time, I listen to music and also dance. To the young women in our country, I would like to say that there are a lot of great opportunities in our country; we need good scientists for our developing country and it's up to us to make the difference.

I believe that being successful requires a balance across all facets of life. You can't reach your potential in your professional life if your personal life is off kilter, and, as they say; all the money in the world cannot buy happiness. So the key is to create this sense of harmony and harness the powers all around us both from a personal and profession perspective to help us realise our potential. If you can do that, and live in a fully harmonized way, you really are a wise person.

I can't say balancing the various horizons of my life has always been easy. However, a wise woman recognizes when her life is out of balance and summons the courage to act on and restore harmony. She knows the meaning of true generosity; that happiness is the reward for a life lived in harmony; and will endeavour to maintain courage and grace during times of low tides. Hence, I continue to strive to achieve this balance between these separate yet interrelated aspects of my life.
(As told to Vipul Murarka)

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