

## Bindhya Cariappa: A woman has many roles to play

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My father was an army officer and we saw frequent relocation, as a result of which we learned very early in life to adapt to a new environment every few years. This has been helpful in keeping an open mind to different cultures, values and practices. We learned the importance of quickly integrating into a new community. This meant a lot of learning, knowing the place well, learning the language, understanding local culture and of course making new friends.

I had just completed a Master's degree in Pharmacy when I saw an advert for clinical research associates (CRA) from Smith Kline Beecham. Eighteen years ago this was a role that was very new to India but the description promised an interesting career in research. I was selected as the first CRA for SmithKline Beecham's operations in India. I had a great learning experience in the UK and that helped me understand the principles of clinical research (before the ICH GCP guidelines were rolled out) and initiate GCP compliant trials in India. It has been a very interesting journey ever since.

Working with an entrepreneur as your manager, is a pleasure as it helps you explore possibilities. Having interacted with the local clinical research community for several years, I held a strong belief that we can service all of ClinTec's clinical research functional requirements from India. Dr Rabinder Buttar, the founder and chairperson, ClinTec International, did support this expansion and as a result we added on many more functional verticals within our operations in India. The Indian operations today supports the full service capabilities for ClinTec International.

With constantly evolving technologies and regulations, one of the biggest challenges I face, is building capacity and capabilities. While some of these have been internal requirements a lot has been external, as we have a strong presence in

emerging markets. All these challenges have been overcome with effective strategies that consider local practices and limitations.

However, the current challenge we face is in India where, well-thought-out regulations are a critical and are urgently required to ensure ethical and viable conduct of clinical trials. I believe that this challenge could be overcome when all stakeholders work together by contributing their knowledge and expertise to develop a robust and relevant strategy and processes that facilitate a fair conduct of trials in this country. At the moment there is a lot to be done before we get there.

The young women I see today are quite focused and committed to achieving their career objectives. Based on my experience so far in India and other parts of the world, I believe that clinical research provides equal opportunities to all for growth and development. Women who have a passion to learn and acquire new knowledge and skills, and work tirelessly and efficiently towards meeting their individual and organizational goals, are bound to be very successful in all that they undertake! However, a role that involves long hours and travel does throw up challenges in striking a balance between personal and professional commitments.

A woman has many roles to play each day and managing all these roles effectively requires very good organizational skills. But more importantly, having a family that supports you and a manager who extends a little flexibility, is a blessing, as it helps you keep focussed on objectives to be achieved, both at home and at work.

**(As told to Vipul Murarka)**