

International Women's Day (IWD) Discussion: Creating Opportunities for Women in the Pharma Industry

On 10th of March 2021, in the light of IWD week, Women in Pharma - ISPE Singapore Affiliate, held a virtual discussion on Creating Opportunities in the Pharma Industry.

The discussion was aligned with this year's IWD theme of #ChooseToChallenge. The roundtable was led by Dr Julia Gandhi, who is the Chair of Women in Pharma, ISPE Singapore Affiliate. We had with us a distinguished panel of inspiring industrial professionals: Ee Lynn Kok, Director of Enterprise Regulatory Compliance at Johnson & Johnson, Preeti Kachroo, Global Affairs Principal Scientist at GSK Consumer Healthcare, Stephanie Donat, Head of MS&T at Novartis and Pierre Winnepenninckx, CEO of No Deviation.

The discussion kicked off with a question on how companies can improve hiring practices, to which Pierre responded and emphasised on the importance of keeping the Job Description gender neutral, choosing a diverse interview panel and a conscious effort on the hiring team's end. His views were also echoed by Stephanie. Preeti also brought up a brilliant point on how having the knowledge of Inclusion & Diversity (I&D) is essential for hiring managers in order to achieve equity of opportunities for all.

Subsequently, Ee Lynn shared her thoughts on how work culture and communication are quintessential in achieving equal opportunities for all genders. She brought up that recognising that talent is never gender specific and self-actualisation by individuals are key means of achieving equal opportunities at work. Pierre also shared that he makes a point to speak up against any casual sexist remark he witnesses at workplace to stop them from being normalised, and to create an inclusive work environment.

The panellists also shared some of their very inspiring stories on how they overcame the barriers to opportunity and thrived. Lack of mobility was identified as the most prevalent roadblock in career for women during the discourse. Preeti spoke about how the lack of mobility has led to women losing or not getting some key positions at work because they are not able to make work-related trips as a result of families' expectations. Stephanie shared on how she resonated most with age as a barrier, and how frequent self-reflection and translating that to her performance at work has helped her in overcoming this obstacle.

The panel ended off on a sweet note with the panel speakers saying a few words to inspire the new generation of women in pharma. The IWD discussion shed light on many insightful points and inspiring stories shared by the panel of speakers. The event strengthened the WIP network in Asia as it engaged participants from Singapore, Indonesia, Japan, India and Malaysia, who actively contributed in making the discussion an enriching and meaningful one.

View the recording of the session on: <https://youtu.be/fP9wZfnGZOW>

Article written by: Harshita Sachdev, Women in Pharma Vice Chair, ISPE Singapore affiliate