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â??Responsibilities of women in the life science sector have increased multiple folds during the pandemicâ?•

08 March 2022 | Features

On Womenâ??s Day, in conversation with Dr Priti V Warke- Director of the Cell biology division and Head of Regulatory Affairs at HiMedia Laboratories



What were the major challenges faced in 2021- on the professional and personal front, and how did you overcome those?

Year 2020 has helped HiMedia to become more agile and use opportunities that appeared daunting, revisit organizational culture, rethink work plans and improve productivity. Most importantly it improved our ability to overcome challenges.

As the market started opening up in 2021, we had to fulfill the pending orders that were placed by our customers before lockdown as well as the incoming new orders. In addition, our R & D team was working overtime, developing media for vaccine production and many other products related to COVID-19 like antibody testing kits. At about the same time, there was a surge of a second COVID-19 wave. Workload had increased multiple folds and we had limited staff in place. Managing the entire supply chain and increased workload with a limited staff, was the major challenge we faced then. To address this, we stuck to the most basic solution, Communication. We encouraged proper and continuous communication externally with our customers and as well as internally with our team.

On a personal front, a major challenge was managing and ensuring that the new education system (online) actually helps my children the same way that they would during regular schooling. Also setting up a reasonable limit on the screen time was a very difficult issue to tackle between the children and us. Children were also trying to cope up on their own with the new way of life because of my long work hours. I compensated the time by making sure whatever time we shared was fun and interactive. I never let them feel weak, gave them courage, taught ways to keep themselves fit and motivated and most importantly to have faith that everything will be good soon.

Any take-home message for all women achievers in the life sciences sector?

Responsibilities of women in the life science sector have increased multiple folds during the pandemic but they rose very befittingly to the occasion. I would like to congratulate them for being more courageous, supportive and motivating, than they had ever been before. Women are inherent leaders and influencers, it's just that they need to restructure their perspectives of self belief. I would encourage them to leave their comfort zones and take more risks in an endeavor to turn their beliefs into reality.

About Her-

Dr Priti V. Warke is the director of the Cell biology division and heads the Regulatory Affairs at HiMedia Laboratories. She completed her M.B.B.S. from B.J.Medical College, Pune and M.S. from the Catholic University of America, Washington DC.

She has been passionately involved in R & D, Operational and Administrative activities of the Cell biology wing of HiMedia. She is deeply committed to enhancing the employee experience through the development of a holistic approach towards employee engagement and culture.

She is a staunch supporter of non-animal alternatives and believes that making them accessible & affordable would aid in the reduction of carbon footprint and the transition of the industry to more humane and sustainable resources. She is currently working on developing serum-free media required for manufacturing of monoclonal antibodies and vaccines. She has been instrumental in starting the stem cell and primary cell division with a vision to foster regenerative medicine and stem cell therapy research in our country.

She played a key role in the development of the Viral Transport Medium (VTM) for H1N1 during the 2009 epidemic in a short span of 2 months. This media was later used during the pandemic all over India for transporting patient samples. The VTM kit is currently being used for collecting samples to test coronavirus infections and is considered the gold standard globally. Today, HiMedia is the largest validated & certified manufacturer of the VTM kits in India and amongst the top 3 globally.

Being a leader, assuming a multitude of roles comes naturally to her and she keeps excelling in each one with equal zest and spur. Starting her career as an Assistant Scientist, Dr Priti Warke has risen to the levels of director taking one step at a time, and has very effectively maintained a healthy work life balance. She moves towards her goal to make a difference in the lives of people using science & technology, thus keeping her humane side alive.

Apart from handling the business hum-drums, Dr Priti Warke is a hands-on mother and an avid yoga practitioner and guides people through yoga for their physical and mental well being.