

"The future looks bright for women in biotech"

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—**Dr Alpna Seth**, Managing Director, Biogen Idec India, Gurgaon

With a career spanning two decades in life sciences, covering all major verticals in the industry, Dr Alpna Seth has proven her expertise as a skillful leader at various managerial levels. Alpna shares a passion and commitment to the cause of promoting education and well-being of underprivileged children, particularly the girl child

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Q What are the challenges you faced during the initial stage of your

The main challenge has been in striking a good work-life balance. I have always kept family my number one priority. I am fortunate that I had strong family support to help me tide over some of the extra challenges women face. On the professional front, I don't think I faced

Passion for work, taking initiative, and resourcefulness, are three ingredients to achieve success. I don't give up on anything easily. I have found women quite adept at multi-tasking. Ultimately, there is no

substitute for hard work. I have never relied on someone else to actively mentor me or shape my career; I believe that is primarily my own responsibility and privilege. Over the years, I have developed my own leadership style and self-confidence. I try to learn from leaders of all walks of life and embrace values and practices, which I believe in. It is also very important to be self-aware and constantly willing to evolve. I strongly believe in the dignity of labor.

Q What are the factors that hinder women from reaching leadership positions?

Globally, there are fewer women in top leadership positions in companies and organizations. The life sciences industry is no exception, although most professional organizations have fair recruitment and employment policies.

Q As a woman leader, how do you look at your staff?

I ensure that we follow our company's gender-blind hiring process, provide equal opportunity to all employees in an open, safe environment, practice meritocracy in performance management; and offer reasonable flexibility for both women and men to balance their professional and personal commitments, while addressing the company's needs and objectives.

Q How do you see the future for women in the life sciences industry?

The number of women in the life sciences industry is quite significant, and this trend is likely to continue. I believe, today in the US more women are pursuing science and higher studies than men are. We are seeing more women opting for engineering and medicine; also the number of women joining the workforce is on the rise. At Biogen, at least 50 percent of our employees, globally, are women. Across the biotech and pharma value chain, there are equal opportunities for women and men.