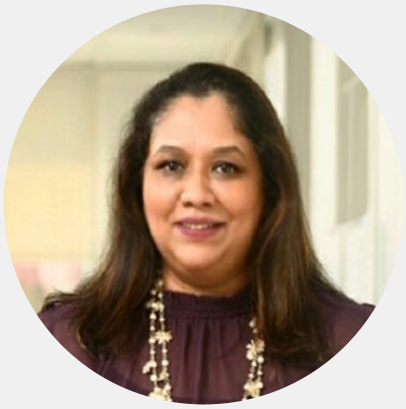
Jayashri Kulkarni – General Manager & Country Head, J&J Innovative Medicine India and South Asia; Executive Sponsor DEI, J&J India



Practice venturing into areas that make you uncomfortable; these are the assignments that give us maximum learning and personal growth. If you have the aspiration, raise your hand even if you think you are only 80 percent ready; you'll find support, sponsors and mentors who will guide you and ensure your success

21.02.2024

Tags: India, J&J, Janssen, Innovation, Access, Strategy

J&J India's Jayashri Kulkarni lays out her approach to comprehensive leadership, drawing on her diverse career history across various sectors; her mandate to leverage innovative assets to transform disease management in India; and the importance of actively championing diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) within the company, building a future-fit organization that reflects a diverse and inclusive culture.

How has your career evolved over 25 years in healthcare and pharmaceuticals, and what is the mandate of your current position?

My journey in the healthcare sector has been a terrific opportunity to observe and learn from the transformation healthcare has seen in India and across many markets in the Asia Pacific. Perhaps as early as in high school, healthcare has fascinated me, and it was a resolve to play a part in this space in whichever form I could. Very soon, this became the purpose that anchored my career through diverse roles in pharmaceuticals, healthcare consulting, and MedTech across Indian and multinational companies. This journey encompassed a spectrum of responsibilities, ranging from sales and marketing, mergers and acquisitions, business development, strategy and insights, consulting, and commercial leadership.

My association with Johnson & Johnson (J&J) started more than 13 years ago in India, evolved into setting up and leading the Global Business Insights function for the Asia Pacific region and then transitioned to the pharmaceutical business four years ago as a commercial leader overseeing several portfolios. The assignments gave me a terrific perspective across 14 markets/countries in the Asia Pacific, analyzing them from a short- and long-term lens that facilitated strategic planning and innovation efforts and monitoring our competitive performance. The leadership lessons were equally if not more valuable in appreciating the diversity of markets and the people; leading virtual teams even before the COVID pandemic highlighted the value of new ways of working, learning the ropes of influencing without authority and observing leaders zoom in/out to build strategic positions and investment decisions for business growth.

In my current role as the General Manager, Country Head of Innovative Medicine in India and South Asia, a position I assumed nine months ago, there's a deep commitment to build a clear vision for the company in India and steer its operations to make a significant impact on the patients, HCPs and caregivers in the country. Along with that is the accountability to build a future fit organization that can leverage my team's strength and experience and create a strong pipeline of capable leaders with an aspirational growth mindset. In addition, I believe there is a responsibility and opportunity to shape the healthcare landscape in the country, whether it's the policies and reforms that are evolving to enable a strong capability-build in India or putting healthcare among the top career choices for today's youth.

I am a huge proponent of championing diversity, equity, and inclusion within J&J and serve as the executive sponsor for these initiatives. Alongside my professional commitments, I find fulfilment in mentoring women leaders and sharing experiences and insights through external organizations. I also serve on the academic advisory council of a leading business school in India, ensuring that the learning programs designed and delivered are aligned with the industry's current and emergent needs.

What specific mandate were you entrusted with, and how does it align with the overarching objectives of J&J?

The mandate revolved around two central pillars, representing J&J's commitment to innovation and healthcare transformation.

Firstly, focus on leveraging our portfolio of innovative and specialty assets to catalyze a paradigm shift in disease management within the Indian context. This encompasses a multifaceted approach,

from commercializing our cutting-edge assets to exploring novel access solutions. Additionally, we aim to forge strategic partnerships with enablers that facilitate earlier patient engagement, aligning therapies with individual needs.

All we want to achieve in the first mandate is to focus on sharpening and augmenting our internal capabilities to execute and effectively execute and be future-ready. As our portfolio looks to first-in-class cutting-edge solutions and more personalized, it will need us to take a broader view of the patient journey and work on unlocking bottlenecks not just in access but also in areas such as disease management guidelines, referral pathways, precision diagnostics, HCP skill building etc. Anticipating and addressing these complexities of delivering advanced healthcare solutions is paramount to achieving our mission.

The second mandate encapsulates J&J's commitment to pushing the boundaries of medical innovation and ensuring that our teams are equipped with the expertise and foresight necessary to bring these advancements to the forefront of healthcare delivery in India and South Asia.

Could you shed light on the strategic positioning, business models, and operational aspects contributing to J&J's standing?

According to the latest statistics from IQVIA, we are the sixth-largest multinational in the pharmaceutical market, having moved up five spots over the past three years. This ascent highlights our intentional and competitive approach, which focuses on key therapy areas and prioritizes patient access.

In terms of operations, our commercial presence spans geographies relevant to our diverse portfolios, strategically positioning us to ensure widespread access for patients and healthcare providers. We partner with several small and medium enterprises across the operational value chain, including manufacturing.

We are actively establishing and expanding capabilities locally in specific components of the clinical development of our assets.

Given the company's global growth and commendable performance in India, how do you assess the significance of the Indian and South Asian operations within the broader global context?

Globally, at Johnson & Johnson there is a keen awareness of India and South Asia's unique potential, the complexity of this market, and the substantial unmet needs that present significant opportunities for participation. This is reflected in the establishment of global capability centers, such as J&J Global Services (GS), J&J Supply Chain's Global Digital & Analytics Centres (GDAC D&DS), J&J Innovative Medicine R&D's Integrated Data Analytics & Reporting (IDAR), and J&J Technology (JJT). Our Bengaluru site supports all J&J sectors, functions, regions, and stakeholders, providing customer-centric end-to-end services driven by critical capabilities for a future-ready workforce.

We have also seen a strong commitment beyond product innovation and supply into areas such as awareness, education, and activation efforts in partnership with government and NGOs over the past decade to contribute towards Tuberculosis, which is part of the country's national health agenda.

India's talent has also seen very successful trajectories in roles across regions, worldwide teams, and functions, and today, many hold leadership roles in commercial and enabling functions worldwide.

Additionally, we see an active investment of time and mentoring support through our global employee resource groups to facilitate awareness and participation of women in STEM2D (*Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics, Manufacturing and Design)* careers in India.

Could you provide insights into Johnson & Johnson's portfolio presence in India, are there specific nuances in the portfolio's representation in India? Additionally, could you shed light on the growth drivers within the Indian context and the opportunities ahead for Johnson & Johnson?

Johnson & Johnson's portfolio in India reflects its global therapeutic areas, encompassing a diverse range, including oncology, neuroscience, immunology, and cardiovascular metabolic.

While our established business portfolio continues its steady momentum, our growth drivers in India primarily revolve around oncology, immunology, and neuroscience. These therapeutic areas hold significant opportunities to substantially impact patient outcomes. We see an opportunity to bring some of the best-in-class breakthrough innovations to India and shape the dialogue and landscape in these therapy areas, ranging from diagnosis, referrals, treatment guidelines, and access solutions to normalizing conversations in mental health and chronic immunological

disorders.

What is the current state of the healthcare sector in India, considering challenges and growth opportunities, and how does J&J contribute to enhancing healthcare access in the country?

A blend of challenges and substantial opportunities currently marks the Indian healthcare sector. Despite the historically low healthcare expenditure, there is a notable shift with healthcare gaining prominence, especially post-COVID, which has created strong tailwinds for the industry.

Healthcare spending by the government has seen prioritization and doubled in the past decade, focusing on infrastructure and capability-building efforts and emerging both as a payor and provider. A combination of public/social insurance efforts (Ayushman Bharat) and accelerated private insurance penetration suggests that by next year, more than 50 percent of the Indian population will have some form of insurance. Health infrastructure is expected to grow 35 percent over the next five years, predominantly driven by the private healthcare players continuing to expand bed capacity and capabilities. Increasing globalization and digitalization have also driven patients and caregivers to actively seek best-in-class therapies and explore avenues to access advanced healthcare solutions.

In essence, the evolving landscape offers significant potential for collaboration and innovation to drive positive transformations in the Indian healthcare sector.

J&J is actively engaged in a multifaceted approach to enhance healthcare access in India.

On a broader community impact level, the company collaborates with UNICEF in 13 states in India to upskill over 0.4 million frontline healthcare workers through year 1, aiming to address fundamental healthcare issues and contribute to community well-being.

J&J recognizes the importance of partnerships in the commercial sphere to create awareness and facilitate diagnostic decision-making. Precision medicine, particularly in oncology, stands out as a focal point. The company is partnering with diagnostic firms and centres of excellence nationwide to streamline the diagnosis process. By creating awareness and education among healthcare practitioners, J&J aims to reduce patients’ time from initial contact with a medical professional to receiving the correct diagnosis and subsequent treatment decisions.

With a keen focus on diagnosis, J&J sees this area as pivotal in collapsing the timeframe between initial symptoms and reaching the right specialist. The goal is to expedite the patient's journey and minimize the potential for misdiagnoses, illustrating the company's commitment to addressing healthcare challenges in India. The initiative extends beyond oncology to other therapeutic areas like neurosciences and immunology, where unique challenges require tailored solutions to improve patient outcomes.

With digitalization gaining momentum globally, especially in healthcare, where do you see the major trends in India? How do these trends align with the evolving healthcare scenario in India, and to what extent has digitalization facilitated or transformed various aspects of the healthcare pathway?

Digitalization has profoundly impacted healthcare in India, reflecting a convergence of trends that have reshaped various aspects of the healthcare landscape.

The National Digital Health Mission set up by the government looks to build an ecosystem that serves the needs of healthcare stakeholders, bringing efficiency, transparency and improved patient experience through the setup of personalized Health IDs, federated health records, health registries, health data analytics and telemedicine networks.

Access to information for patients and caregivers has increased, with individuals leveraging diverse sources, including company portals and social media groups, to seek information about symptoms and conditions. With over 780 million internet users and nearly 400 million social media users nationwide, accessing on-demand healthcare-related content has become essential to the patient journey.

Communication channels with healthcare practitioners (HCPs) and other stakeholders have experienced a notable shift, particularly during the pandemic. Digital platforms have become instrumental in conducting webinars, facilitating discussions, and disseminating information. The rise of e-detailing, while not replacing face-to-face interactions, has established a balance between deeper conversations and information sharing with a broader audience.

In summary, the trends in digitalization align with the evolving healthcare scenario in India, offering opportunities for enhanced patient engagement, streamlined supply chains, and more efficient communication channels with healthcare professionals. The digital transformation of healthcare pathways reflects a dynamic landscape responding to the needs and preferences of

diverse stakeholders in the Indian healthcare ecosystem.

I want to share the example of one of our campaigns, ‘Be the Change’ for TB: a groundbreaking digital campaign that revolutionized TB awareness in India. Our initiative sparked a movement for change in a country where millions suffer due to a lack of knowledge and stigma. Targeting the youth, the campaign leveraged the power of digital platforms to engage and empower. We reached 55 million individuals with precision marketing, leaving an indelible impression of 371 million. Through the universal language of music, we shattered barriers and normalized conversations about TB. Collaborating with youth influencers Vaani Kapoor, a well-known Bollywood celebrity, and Kaam Bhari, a young rap artist who has been a caregiver, we amplified our message with authenticity and resonance.

The impact? A resounding 15 percent surge in TB awareness, translating into 105,000 critical health-seeking actions. Remarkably, 36,000 youth pledged to become ‘TB Changemakers’, heralding a new era of proactive health advocacy.

In your role as the Executive Sponsor for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) at J&J, you’ve highlighted the company’s robust DEI initiatives. Could you provide more insights into your beliefs and the significance of DEI efforts within J&J’s culture?

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) are deeply ingrained in J&J’s culture, mirroring the company’s commitment to fostering an inclusive workplace. The role of the Executive Sponsor for DEI involves championing these values among leaders and facilitating transformative initiatives. At both the country and global levels, DEI efforts are orchestrated through a DEI Council, which oversees a range of Employee Resource Groups (ERGs) focusing on specific areas. In India, active ERGs include WLI (Women’s Leadership and Inclusion), WiSTEM2D (Women in *Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics, Manufacturing and Design*), GenNow (Younger Generation Leaders), Open and Out (LGBTQ+ Identity), and ADA (Alliances for Different Abilities).

WLI emphasizes women’s leadership and inclusion, providing a platform for collaboration and initiatives supporting gender equity. WiSTEM2D empowers women in STEM, manufacturing and digital fields, contributing to educational initiatives that encourage women to pursue careers in these domains and targeting schools, universities, and young professionals in the community. GenNow focuses on accelerating our global culture of inclusion where every individual belongs. With the vision to provide members with the inspiration and skills to build their future at Johnson & Johnson. Open and Out addresses LGBTQ+ inclusion, developing policies and creating an

environment that supports diverse identities. ADA in India currently focuses on raising awareness around mental health and disability, contributing to an inclusive workplace with an opportunity to build an inclusive environment for the differently abled as well.

The DEI Council's overarching goal is to build allies among employees across these ERGs, fostering education, awareness, sensitization, and actionable initiatives. Engagement with external organizations, like the Healthcare Business Women's Association, adds a valuable dimension to J&J's DEI efforts, contributing to self-led learning and mentorship programs. External mentorships for women leaders, partnerships with schools and colleges to encourage women in STEM, and interactions with global R&D leaders have been instrumental in showcasing the possibilities of STEM careers.

These multifaceted initiatives align with Our Credo and our broader commitment to DEI, reflecting the belief that DEI is not just a workplace initiative but a purpose-driven commitment. The impact is evident in the enthusiastic response from employees who actively participate, create agendas, activate teams, and engage in impactful initiatives beyond work, resonating with a broader sense of purpose and relevance.

What are your expectations and priorities for J&J Innovative Medicine in the next two to three years?

Looking ahead, the top priority for J&J Innovative Medicine is to continue transforming disease management. While bringing our pipeline assets into the market with the right access solutions will be the most critical priority, readying our organization and talent to amplify the impact these therapies can make will be paramount. Several other enablers will be essential in supporting our teams to deliver the promise our assets bring to patients

Building on successful partnerships and impactful initiatives like what we did in TB management, the focus remains on leveraging the portfolio of innovative and specialty assets to make a meaningful difference. Collaborating with relevant government stakeholders, NGOs, and influencers has proven effective, and this model has the potential to be extended to other therapy areas.

The experience gained during the digital call to action campaigns for TB highlighted the power of engaging the youth and leveraging digital platforms for awareness. This strategy may be replicated in addressing other health challenges, recognizing the significant impact of influencers and digital

campaigns on public awareness and behaviour. We've also seen this impact through our iCARE4U and #allmindsmatter campaigns in chronic immunological disorders and mental health.

In summary, the next few years will see a continued commitment to driving disease management transformation through the introduction of a strong pipeline of assets, expansion in partnerships, and innovative approaches to create meaningful impact in healthcare while building our team to be future-fit and ready to deliver on and shape the vision we have signed off for our business.

What encouraging message or learning would you like to share with women based on your experience, especially for those skilled women who might hesitate to take on leadership roles?

I believe in embracing your choices, having a purpose, putting yourself in uncomfortable situations and paying it forward.

Let me elaborate, it may be a challenging journey towards your goal, sometimes even a bit chaotic, but every decision and choice you make is worth it. **Embrace your choices** and never doubt them.

Combine your aspirations with a **strong sense of purpose**, and look for role models to continue motivating you to think big. Throughout my career, I've experienced constant encouragement and constructive feedback, enabling me to make choices confidently.

Practice venturing into **areas that make you uncomfortable**; these are the assignments that give us maximum learning and personal growth. If you have the aspiration, raise your hand even if you think you are only 80 percent ready; you'll find support, sponsors and mentors who will guide you and ensure your success. You will be surprised how many of them will line up to cheer you, focus on those and cancel all other noise.

Pay it forward in as many ways as possible and demonstrate that the path to leadership is achievable for every woman and that one does not always need to take extraordinary measures.

This is a cause I'm committed to — creating more examples of successful women in leadership roles that others can identify with and say, "I can do this too!"

See more interviews