

Woman in science: How fortunate do you feel?

It is a well-known fact that women in science were rarely acknowledged or credited for their work before the 1970s. Much of what we hear or read suggests that in the 21st century this situation has changed. Yet here and now, "Women in science are a rare breed. In the biopharma field not only do they often make less than their male colleagues, they often rarely receive any recognition".

Under-promoted, under-paid and under-recognised... this was uncomfortable reading. We should remind ourselves that much progress has been made over the past 50 years. We are frequently surrounded by inspirational women who have shattered the 'glass ceiling' and don't let gender bias stand in their way, but do the stories about these wonderful, successful women lull us into a false sense that we are winning the good fight?

We turned to three women who work in the biopharma industry to obtain some honest insights about what it means to be working in our industry in the 21st century.

Two scientists at Spanish multi-national Grifols, were keen to answer questions put to them by LSKH. This leading global healthcare company develops plasma-derived medicines and other innovative biopharmaceutical solutions.

The first to respond to our questions was Carla Mossinger. Based in Los Angeles, she works in the CDMO area in Grifols as a Business Development Manager.

Q: What advice would you give to young women aspiring to follow your path?

A: Thank you for asking that question. I think that I am still

figuring out my own career and there is still a lot to learn and grow, but to young women aspiring to follow any path, my advice would be to believe in yourself and your abilities. Surround yourself with supportive people who encourage and uplift you. Take advantage of every opportunity to learn and grow, whether it's through education, internships or volunteering. Be persistent and resilient and don't let setbacks discourage you. Remember that success is not always linear and it's okay to take different paths and make mistakes along the way. Most importantly, never give up on your dreams and keep working towards your goals with passion and dedication.

Q: Who inspired you, as a younger woman?

A: It is so hard for me to just choose one person because many people inspired and keep inspiring me in my life, starting with my parents with their strength and compassion, and my brother who is the best role model that I could ever have, always pursuing his dreams, but never forgetting kindness and empathy. My family taught me everything about perseverance, courage and – the most important thing – how to work every day to become a better person.

But I also find inspiration in many other places, in a friend that has faced obstacles, but

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has learned how to overcome them and transform them into something positive, in a kind word at the grocery store from a stranger, in the people that are working and trying every day to make this world a better place forgetting their own interests, just for a common good.

Overall, any person who inspires others to believe in themselves, reach their full potential and make a positive impact in the world is an inspiration for me.

Q: How important is it to educate and mentor emerging leaders in the industry?

A: Educating and mentoring emerging leaders in the industry is extremely important for several reasons.

Firstly, emerging leaders are the future of the industry

and at the end of our society, and investing in their development will help ensure a brighter future for everyone. By providing them with the necessary skills, knowledge and support, we can empower them to take on leadership roles, drive innovation, and make a positive impact in their communities.

Also, they may face unique challenges and obstacles as they navigate their careers and personal lives. By providing them with guidance and mentorship, we can help them develop resilience, build networks and gain the confidence they need to succeed.

Lastly, educating and mentoring people in these roles can also have a positive ripple effect on society as a whole. When emerging leaders are equipped with the skills and knowledge they need to lead effectively, they can inspire others to follow in their footsteps and make positive changes in their own communities.

In short, investing in the education and mentorship of emerging leaders is essential for building a brighter future, fostering innovation and creating positive change in society.

The second contribution from Grifols was provided by Marga Vines. Based in Barcelona, she works in the CDMO area in Grifols as a Senior Business Development Manager



Carla Mossinger - Grifols



Marga Vines - Grifols



Chiara Gallotti - Cerbios-Pharma SA

Q: What were the best decisions that set you on the 'right' path?

A: Probably the best decision I've made is to have trusted myself and be consistent with the actions I've taken, assuming that mistakes can happen, but they should never be an impediment to move to the next level.

When you're feeling aligned, motivated energised and everything flows, then you can say you are on the 'right' path, however, it does not mean not having gone through difficult times and had to make complicated decisions.

Q: Is mentorship an important component of professional development?

A: Understanding what your challenges are and receiving feedback from someone with a different style and experience level to your own, can provide invaluable learning. The mentor must be fully interested, engaged and aligned with the mentee; otherwise it can result in a frustrating experience.

You have to be clear that mentors are there to provide support, advice and trust;

they are not there to provide you with new opportunities or promotions.

It's quite usual to request feedback from someone who works close to us or someone who has followed a similar professional path, but if you consider someone from outside your organisation or from your professional networking you can receive invaluable advice to consider a different perspective that can serve you both professionally and personally.

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Marga Vines - Grifols

Q: What has been your greatest accomplishment?

A: Achieving the perfect balance between personal and professional life. This requires a lot of flexibility and adaptation.

Not having the feeling of having given up something because I felt forced to choose has allowed me to have control of the choices made throughout my career. Choosing implies giving up something and I think I have been able to combine without feeling that I was leaving interesting options on the way. Values such as commitment, discipline and enthusiasm for what one does are the key to achieving any challenge we set ourselves.

Chiara Gallotti of Cerbios-Pharma SA was next to give some illuminating answers to our questions. Based in Switzerland, her employer is a highly qualified CDMO, engaged in cGMP development of APIs, HAPIs, ADCs and biologics.

Q: What has been your greatest accomplishment?

A: My greatest success was that I managed to find a good

balance between my private and professional life. I am the mother of a boy and a girl who are about to start their university careers. I have always tried to be there and to be a safe point of reference for them. When my children were younger, I took the opportunity to work part-time, which helped me a lot. Nevertheless, I have always worked with passion and determination, sometimes with some sacrifice, but I have always given my best in my work and for everything I have dedicated to the companies I have worked for.

However, the right balance has allowed me to find great personal satisfaction in both my private and professional life. Being close to everything surrounding the growth of my children has made me organised, determined, helpful and empathetic. These characteristics have also served me well at a professional level. At work, kindness and respect, together with determination, are the right mix to drive a good team and good relationships with colleagues. It seems easy, but in reality it is not so simple, as for everyone. There are so many difficulties in everyday life and things

often do not go as we want, but we should definitely never give up, even at work.

Q: What types of skills do women in the pharmaceutical industry need to develop?

A: Firstly, a scientific background is mandatory to cover most of the possible figures in a pharmaceutical company. An important quality is the willingness to embrace change, accept it and work together to move forward. It doesn't matter what your role is in the company, but resistance to any kind of change can become an obstacle for the whole team. Working in the pharmaceutical industry means travelling on a very fast train, so it is important to not only have scientific competence and to be a specialist in a scientific sector, but since the pharma world is continuously growing and evolving, people have to collaborate, work in a team, co-ordinate with others, solve complex problems and manage projects to achieve a common objective.

By training I am a chemist and after university I first worked as a synthesis chemist to optimise production processes and then in medicinal chemistry at pharmaceutical companies. Here, I began to understand what is behind

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the development of a drug, the enormous effort that is made, both personally and economically, to bring a product to market that is useful to people. The fact of contributing, even in a small way, to the development of a drug that improves someone's life or relieves their pain motivated me. I know this very well as my brother suffers from a rare disease for which there is no solution and I am personally very committed in new and experimental treatments. Pharmaceutical companies that invest in new drugs are the future for all of us.

When I decided to work in Quality Assurance, I was proud and happy because I knew that my contribution would become more and more important. I have been working in Quality Assurance for many years, my scientific preparation and my practical experiences in production plants and laboratories gave me the basis to be concrete and to talk the same language with other departments. Since it is my daily duty, quality is the most important thing in a pharmaceutical company in order to distribute products according to international laws, but above all patient safety must always be guaranteed. For this reason, the quality assurance department has a great ethical responsibility, not only a commercial one. Intellectual honesty is one of the top qualities, as well as problem-solving and decision-making skills. It is important to be able to liaise with the authorities and to have a good knowledge of the international quality standards, norms and guidelines.

Cerbios-Pharma has relied on me for all my competences and the person I am; I want to demonstrate every day that they have made a good choice.

Q: Have you faced any obstacles that were directly related to being a woman?

A: I think I have always been lucky in the companies I have known. I have always had respect for everyone and I have received it in return. The pharmaceutical world is more innovative than other sectors for women; I know very competent women who hold very important positions and have the full support of the company they work for. However, in my professional career, due to a different culture or for pure sexism, I have not always been fully accepted or have received embarrassing looks, but it happened on very few occasions at specific events.

Women in leadership positions, not just in pharma, have to demonstrate their talent and competence, perhaps more than men, although women – often having typically feminine sensitivity – make them not only good department heads, but also good leaders. A good leader has a good team made up of human resources not workers. A good leader must know how to trust her collaborators by offering them professional opportunities and always treating both men and women with respect. When you identify someone in a team wants to advance their career, you should recognise and value him or her.