

27 Oct 2021 | Interviews

B-Ingelheim India Chief On Strategy, Jardiance Challenge, Gender Balance In Pharma

by Anju Ghangurde

Boehringer Ingelheim's Country Managing Director for India Vani Manja outlines how she expects to shape the German group's growth trajectory in the country, while also dealing with the unexpected pre-expiry challenge to the Jardiance patent. The executive also discusses her personal career journey, learnings from her prior role in the US and gives advice to women executives seeking to move up to the higher echelons of the corporate world.

Boehringer Ingelheim GmbH's Country Managing Director for India Vani Manja took over the reins earlier this year amid pandemic-related turbulence – not really the ideal circumstances to move into the top job in any country.

Manja, in an exclusive conversation with *Scrip*, shares how she navigated the challenges – the last 10 months or so were nothing short of a roller coaster ride, she maintained – and outlines some key strategic efforts underway to build further momentum in India in the German multinational's key focus areas such as diabetes and stroke.

With India seeing the debut of cut-price empagliflozin copies ahead of the expected patent expiry for Boehringer's diabetes blockbuster Jardiance in the country, the spotlight will also be on how deftly Manja steers the company out of the situation.

For now, Boehringer has obtained ad-interim injunctions restraining the two domestic pharmaceutical firms, *MSN Laboratories Pvt. Ltd.* and *Dr. Reddy's Laboratories Ltd.*, from “launching, making, using, offering for sale, selling, importing and / or exporting” their respective generic version of empagliflozin drugs.” Manja said the order reinforces Boehringer's

faith in the Indian legal patent system and the enforcement of patent rights.

However, things appear far from over and challenger Dr Reddy's has already indicated that it isn't backing off easily – the Indian company claimed it is in “full compliance” of legal orders. “Dr. Reddy's filed a patent revocation petition before the High Court of Delhi on 16th October to challenge the validity of the existing patent,” it said.

Manja in addition touched upon some of the learnings from her prior leadership roles at Boehringer in the US and Germany. In her new India role she hopes to further embed a culture that has certain defining characteristics including one that is “inclusive, ensuring psychological safety at a level that everyone has a voice, is heard and feel they belong.”

The executive also shared some important advice for talented women seeking to work their way up the corporate ladder amid the gender gap in the biopharma sector, like in many other industries.

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