

Leading Partnerships for Health

An Interview with Dr. Annalisa Jenkins,
Senior Vice President, Medical Affairs Americas and Global Development, Bristol-Myers Squibb



Dr. Annalisa Jenkins

EDITORS' NOTE Dr. Annalisa Jenkins studied at the Medical College of St. Bartholomew's Hospital in London. Following her undergraduate studies, she earned her medical degree from the University of London. She then accepted a commission with the British Royal Navy and embarked on a nine-year career as a medical officer. During that time, she saw active service in the Gulf conflict in 1991 and was recognized as the first female physician in the British Royal Navy ever to serve at the front line in conflict. In 1997, after becoming a cardiologist, she joined Bristol-Myers Squibb and began a career in pharmaceutical research and development. Dr. Jenkins served in positions of increasing global responsibility until she was appointed as Chief Medical Officer for Europe, the Middle East, and Africa. Then, in 2006, Dr. Jenkins was promoted to Vice President, Global Development, before assuming her current role in 2008.

COMPANY BRIEF New York-based Bristol-Myers Squibb (www.bms.com) is a global biopharmaceutical company whose mission is to extend and enhance human life. With roots that go back 150 years, Bristol-Myers Squibb now has about 35,000 employees working to help patients prevail against serious diseases, such as cancer, heart disease, diabetes, HIV/AIDS, rheumatoid arthritis, hepatitis B, and psychiatric disorders. The company counts among its leading products the heart-disease medicine Plavix, the cancer medicine Erbitux, and the antipsychotic medication Abilify.

What is the role of the Medical Department for Bristol-Myers Squibb in the Americas, and what are your key areas of focus?

I'm responsible for the Medical Department of Bristol-Myers Squibb that spans the U.S., Latin America, and Canada. We focus on ensuring the safe, effective, and appropriate use of our medicines and ultimately ensure that the patient can get appropriate access to our medicines. In doing that, we focus on generating data on our products, which supplements the work that's been done in the late stage of development, sometimes called Phase IV Studies. We interpret that data so we can create insight and knowledge that meet the needs of our customers. Then we ensure this information is appropriately communicated to providers, patients, and payers.

Can technology expedite the R&D process, or is there still the expectation for that 10-year window we've heard about?

Technology has advanced tremendously in the areas of early phase research and discovery. It has really supported the generation of an enormous amount of data and insight, whether it's the discovery of new targets, or our ability to put high numbers of core potential compounds and new medicines through our screening processes. But there remain significant and ongoing challenges, because while there are great new advances in technology, there's an enormous amount of new data coming forward. And the discovery and development of new medicines is increasingly complex.

How closely does Medical Affairs coordinate with other segments of the company?

Our role is to create a seamless flow of data and knowledge that's created in the research and development part of the organization, and to appropriately deliver the information for the benefit of patients. We see ourselves as spanning the seam and enabling the flow of knowledge to patients, physicians, and increasingly to payers and key decision-makers in the health care systems with whom we partner.

You were in the Royal Navy and have had firsthand experience of active duty during the first Iraq war. How much did that experience shape your views on leadership?

In the navy, I learned the importance of making decisions and managing risk. I enjoy making decisions. I see that as a clear part of my role as a leader for the organization. I like to ensure that my decisions are based on the appropriate level of input, and that they are made

in a timely fashion. It is important to me that I step up and model accountability as a leader for my organization.

You seem to be very focused on maintaining an inclusive organization and engaging people. How critical is that for you, and is that a key part of your management style?

Absolutely. As a next-generation biopharma leader, my company needs leaders to pull together diverse global teams, align them around a common goal, and drive the execution of output and value through those teams.

Have you found this to be a business that attracts top women and offers opportunities for women to rise to senior levels?

Yes. I've been very fortunate over the past 13 years at Bristol-Myers Squibb. This is my sixth role, and I've always found that my managers have devoted time to discussing with me opportunities for my own personal development. Many of us now spend a lot of time at Bristol thinking about how to create opportunities for women to aspire and grow into more senior leadership positions. More than 50 percent of the employees at Bristol-Myers Squibb are women.

What is the role of leaders today as corporate citizens, and for you personally, how critical is that work?

I make it a very high priority to personally make a contribution across the nonprofit spectrum. There are two reasons why I think this is important. First, moving into the nonprofit world requires you to think about your own leadership style, because it's a very different challenge to bring together teams in the nonprofit world that can create value and output. Second, it's important to get involved, because some of the skills I've developed in the for-profit sector can bring value and create real opportunities in the nonprofit sector. So it's a win-win situation.

You work in a global organization. How challenging is it to turn the business off, and are you able to get away from it?

I love what I do for Bristol-Myers Squibb. I'm very happy to show up for work each day, energized. But I also recognize that to be very effective in the workplace, to be balanced and objective – and to be able to deal with the challenges that come across my desk every day – it is equally important for me to have a fulfilling life outside of the workplace. I have two teenagers, and the time I spend with them is precious and certainly reenergizing. ●