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In this episode, Taren meets with Barbara Lopez Kunz, Global Chief Executive, DIA.

Taren: Barbara, welcome to the PharmaVOICE WoW podcast program.

Barbara: Thank you, Taren. It's a pleasure to be here.

Taren: You and I had met along the way and I know you're responsible for the leadership and oversight of DIA global operations – big job, big responsibility, big association. Talk to me about your near-term and long-term vision for the organization.

Barbara: That's a big question, Taren. Let me start out by first sharing a little bit about what DIA is because that will help give context to how we're thinking about that near-term and long-term strategy. DIA has been around for a long time, about 55 years, and we are an organization that brings together the thought leaders across the entire healthcare ecosystem to work on those difficult issues that need to be resolved in order to get medical products, therapy drugs, devices to patients.

And in the world of information sharing so that you can advance along that very, very broad spectrum globally, there's been a lot of change. So there's a real need for a detailed conversation, whether it's between academics and industry regulators, payers, healthcare providers, clinicians, etc., and patients of course, there are a lot of areas that are really ripe for resolution and for improvement. So DIA has been doing that for a very long time and in the world that we're in right now with so much change, new therapy, new regulatory policies, the importance of patient engagement, our work cannot be more important.

I would also add that in the current environment where there is really a need for a trusted voice, a non-bias broker, if you will, to ensure that there's relevance and the decisions and the information that's being shared, we find DIA being ever more important.

So going back to the question, what are we thinking about the near term – what we have found is that our ability to really table the really essential issues and questions that need to get resolved has been so important to getting ever increasing engagement.

So, we have been growing around the world because people see that they need a forum for working these issues and provided we get the right questions out, provided we get the right knowledge holders, the key opinion leaders to the table to debate and discuss and share their knowledge, there has been a really positive response to that worldwide. So we will continue to do that.

Our near-term vision is to continue to be at the table creating those critical agendas. But in this world of ever increasing access to use of digital technologies we're finding also if I think about the sort of medium term, our goal is really to make DIA real time accessible to people around the world wherever you are.

And so what we're doing is we're working on how we utilize technology to make that content available, whether you're sitting in Brazil or you're sitting in Washington D.C. or you're in Tanzania that you can turn on your cellphone you can access real time what's happening, what's being discussed, what new ideas are being brought forward through DIA. So our sort of medium to long-term vision is that we would do that so that those tens of thousands of people who are committed to DIA can share in the knowledge on their cellphones or however they choose to access us. That's a big undertaking because the technology is changing as well as all the other dynamics that are going on within our ecosystem, but we're committed and our board is committed to a strategy that takes us there.

Taren: Excellent. You've mentioned just a second ago that in the near term you're going to keep addressing some of those questions and providing forums for those topics. Can you identify what are some of the current hot topics that your folks are grappling with?

Barbara: Sure, yeah. I mean if you really kind of double click on it, at the very top are the really exciting new technologies that are coming forward, never what I have imagined in my career of some decades now that we would have diseases that are being supported through cures. Never would I have imagined that we would have turned cancer into a chronic condition. Never would I have imagined 3D printing of organs, gene therapy, gene editing, all the things that are coming through the amazing evolution of genetic medicine that's been going on for the last several decades.

So those topics are very alive and well in DIA. But more importantly the processes to ensure that those technologies go from early ideation to patients are also a critical part of what we're talking about. So the use of data, real world data in evidence in supporting the process, whether it's in regulatory decision making or in clinical development it's that use of data is a real part of what we're talking about, new clinical trial designs that make it more efficient and effective and more appropriate for patients, patient engagement across the entire healthcare continuum. How do we ensure that we understand the people who are living with diseases as we build therapeutic responses to those. And then regulatory harmonization; DIA has been very

involved with the ICH really trying to ensure that guidances are being shared and implemented effectively, but also ensuring that we train regulators and emerging markets or evolving markets that need to align to some of the best practices and regulation are involved there, and we're doing all of that on a global scale.

Those are some of the critical topics that you'll hear about that if I can kind of bring us forward to a comment I made earlier about trust. You know we've had an issue recently with information being provided to the FDA here in the United States and the trust that perhaps has been jeopardized a little bit through that information sharing. So I think some of these issues around open transparent communication and trust will also feature in some of the topics that you'll see coming forward in DIA meetings, annual meetings and perhaps even in a DIA global annual meeting that's coming forward here in Washington, D.C. in 2020.

Taren: Excellent. Thank you. You talked about the global operations. Obviously, DIA is very well established in the United States and Europe, where do you see some of the business growth opportunities in terms of geography for the DIA?

Barbara: Yeah, very good question. We have been very involved and really inspired by the progress being made in Asia. Of course, Japan has been very, very advanced on many fronts that I've talked about earlier biomedical research, regulation, etc., but we're seeing many other countries across Asia quickly come up. We've seen a lot of advancements happening in China with an amazing amount of improvement in terms of regulatory policy, biomedical research, the sort of evolution of a tremendous amount of entrepreneurial companies, academic research, etc.

We're also seeing that now in other parts of Asia, in Korea, of course in Singapore, some early signals coming from India. If I keep going across we're seeing evolution as well in the Middle East and we were very involved with helping to evolve regulatory policy in some of the countries in the Middle East as well as some of the investments in that clinical research. So I would say Asia is really at the tip of the sphere and then some of the other countries are coming behind.

Taren: You've been at the helm of DIA for just more than six years now. What has surprised you the most about your role?

Barbara: You know, it's so interesting, Taren, when I was in my earlier years of my career I worked in industry and I spent a little time in academia and then of course I ran part of a big research institution, I was always down working in one of the sort of stakeholder communities. I was either in a multinational company or, as I said, one of the other groups. What I always felt like was where I was frustrated or I felt there were obstacles it always was kind of how do you move your technology, how do you move a product from where it was to move it along the spectrum to get it to a patient.

And what really surprised me and actually that was the motivation when I found the DIA role on my doorstep, that was one of my motivations for joining was I really felt like there was a need to have these like system level discussions. And so what surprised me was how willing and, in fact, enthusiastic people are at addressing those problems. When I was sitting in my prior roles I sort of felt like these were insurmountable obstacles in getting a therapy from like an idea to a patient. But what I found in DIA is that people who come into this healthcare ecosystem they share that common thread of really wanting to see their work and uplift and outcomes that benefit the patient. And the willingness for people to engage and share their knowledge has been incredibly inspiring, and the willingness to break down those hurdles has been really, really positive.

So, I'm seeing a lot of movement. I'm not very patient, so would I like to see it faster? Of course I would. But I've just been very inspired and impressed by the people that I work with, not on staff at DIA, but the broad DIA community and how willing people are to open up and to share that vision of really accelerating healthcare product development in getting accessible materials, accessible therapies to patients around the world.

Taren: Excellent. Thank you. You talked earlier about some of the new technologies not only from a medical standpoint, but from a clinical trial standpoint, that's exciting, there's no doubt at getting drugs to patients sooner, more efficiently and safer is always a great aspiration. But personally what excites you about your role?

Barbara: I will tell you that this, although I've had many, many global jobs because I've always gravitated towards those kinds of jobs, I really feel like this job has exposed me more specifically to what really is happening around the world and it's been an incredible learning experience, number one. Number two, we are very close – the cause-effect relationships in what we do in DIA is very exciting. So we will convene a research project, we will bring stakeholders to the table for a discussion and our ability to go from problem discussion and solution can be very fast in a relative sense. So I find that very, very exciting and very rewarding.

Taren: Excellent. DIA is a member-based organization and with more than 18,000 members now. How do you provide value to the membership and then balance and address the different needs of its constituents?

Barbara: I was thinking about that not too long ago since we have a lot of activities going on right now looking at how we really, really increased our engagements in line with some of the discussions we've had previously around our digital strategy, and I will share that when I first took the job I thought to myself how in the world do you do that because think about it we're working in 85 countries, we're working with people across the entire stakeholder community, regulators, researchers, etc. – as I mentioned earlier, we're working with people who are

students all the way to people who were at those sort of peak of their careers to people who are retired, every sub-demographic you can think about they're in DIA.

So the question is how do you create a strategy which focuses on the needs of that broad class of people and what I found actually working on it is that there is that common thread that people really want to invest in their own knowledge, their own professional development, their own ability to make a difference. And so if you focus the strategy there and you try to define how that content, how that knowledge can be tailored, if you will, and localized if it's geographic or tailored to a sub-community, what you find is that it's all kind of the same because at the heart of the content strategy is this overriding mission to accelerate and make available accessible products for patient therapies to patients.

And so we've really stuck our strategy on this idea of generating thought leadership, and that has really born itself out in the improvements that we're seeing in terms of the engagements that we're getting across that entire broad community.

Taren: Wonderful. And speaking of that engagement, as a veteran of the annual Global DIA Conference, how do you keep it fresh every year?

Barbara: This is the most interesting and amazing process that we go through. We haven't talked about a group of volunteers that really are supporting DIA. I can look out through starting with the board of directors or advisory council, sharing committees, program committees, etc. We have an amazing group of people who care about using the DIA platform to advance this knowledge that I keep talking about. And so we have a group of volunteers as sort of those kind of a strategic theory groups and we have program committees that get together – and you might be surprised to find they actually start building the meeting at the meeting for the prior year, so this is a one year program and we have the benefit of their knowledge.

So they'll come to us and they'll share what they believe the key priorities are. We also do a very open call for people in the broad community to bring their ideas forward and the program committee does the mash up of top priorities, speakers and someone said that we're sure that the program that we bring forward at the annual meeting is really the one that's the brainchild of this mash up of all these people who are knowledge holders and experts in their own right. And I think that's really the kind of key to the success of the annual meeting.

We have a global annual meeting in the United States, but we have annual meetings in many countries around the world and they're all highly successful so that knowledge, the agendas, the questions, the speakers critical. But I also want to emphasize that it's not just that that makes the conference fresh each year. We have an amazing group of people on our staff, that are always thinking about creative ways to make the experience of the meeting one that really aids in the knowledge creation and knowledge generation and the learning that happens.

So we're always trying to evolve and innovate at the meeting whether we're using certain types of formats, layouts, use of technology even when it comes down to things like lighting and music and so on, entertainment, how we let people experience and experiment on their own and get them a little bit out of their comfort zone so that they're able to absorb in a way that perhaps moves them away from their day in and day out job and stresses. So we try to be the stimulus for that and we try to maintain a level of agility as we think about what we do so that we're constantly refreshing and not getting too comfortable with the way we've always done it. So hopefully you'd see that when you come to the meeting, so it's content and it's experience in one gigantic complicated package.

Taren: To put simply I got it. So can you give us a preview of what we might expect in Washington, D.C. next year?

Barbara: Oh sure, yeah. I mean I love Washington, D.C. of course. I call it my home and I think being here in our nation's capital is really always thrilling for DIA annual meeting because it's a good destination. Yeah. We'll be looking at 2020 as the future of healthcare here in this city and regions is at the intersection of science regulation and industry. We'll be looking at how some of those new technologies that I talked about earlier make their way through the regulatory process and are made accessible to patients.

You might appreciate that some of these new therapies don't conform to traditional regulatory pathways so there's a lot of work going on in that regard. We'll also continue to focus on kind of the topics of today, if you will, the use data, patient engagement and centrality, regulatory harmonization, but I also think we're going to see a little bit of what I referenced earlier which is perhaps the crisis of confidence that happens when that trust in data can be lost. We saw that recently.

We believe that the open transparency of an organization like DIA help to bring forward that trusted information and that's the foundation of the relationships that we enjoy across the stakeholder community, regulators industry, etc. So there probably will be some discussions around that because I think that needs to be addressed and put back on a plateau that helps to support the future of healthcare product development.

Taren: Looking forward to next June, sounds exciting. Just a little bit ago you talked about the volunteers who provide a lot of the structure for the organization. Each year DIA has a new president my understanding is. This year you worked with Rebecca Vermeulen. What is the benefit of this organizational structure?

Barbara: It's really so impressive. Rebecca started her turn as board leader on July 1 and our board chair got us through a three-year cycle as sort of the incoming and then the board chair

and then the immediate past chair. So I have the opportunity every year to work closely with this group of four people who are the officers, but also the broader group who are all volunteers that represent this global stakeholder community of the DIA. The Board of DIA, all volunteers, they went through a really interesting evolution over my time as Chief Executive of DIA.

When I came here, we had a rather large core that represented kind of the membership at DIA and that was important and useful, but what we found is board members who came from certain constituent groups were approaching the board and saying it would be better for us to think about the stakeholders and get their voice more clearly represented through a different kind of governance model. And so actually it was the regulators, some of our regulators who helped us to create the governance model that we have in DIA today.

So we do have an at-large board of directors but smaller, but we also have these advisory councils that represent the stakeholders that also formed part of our governance framework. So we have a council of regulators that is comprised of regulatory experts from around the world. We have regional advisory councils which essentially serve as like a board of directors for each of the countries in which DIA's strategic plan is being executed and they're cross-functional groups. We have a patient advisory council that's comprised of people who represent the voice of the patient and therapeutic development and finally we have a science advisory council that's really looking at the sort of longer term future of the evolution of science and policy in helping DIA through our board to ensure that our strategy represents and is moving in the direction of those new challenges and disruptions that we're able to take.

So this board works very closely together, very strategic – we have just a wonderful group of people that meet together and really give us incredible support, but more importantly direction and so I can't imagine a better structure. It's just been fun to see it evolve and fun to work with it as it is today.

Taren: That's fantastic. Overseeing such a large organization as the DIA requires really some special leadership qualities. As you said, you have to really think about from the student to the C-suite and to beyond across a number of different constituencies. How would you describe your leadership style and why does that work for the DIA?

Barbara: When I came out of grad school, I went into industry and of course I lead by strategy. I'm a strategic leader, but one of the other elements of my style that I couple was that is a real desire to work collaboratively whether I'm working across that stakeholder group that I just talked about with the board and the advisory council or I'm working with members or I'm working with staff. I feel that the ability to really help people to bring their best game forward is really, really important to the success of any organization.

I would say that I'm very sort of focused on outcomes but I'm focused on doing it in a collaborative way with all the various members that I work with wherever they sit in our DIA ecosystem. So the volunteers honor us with their time and advice, but I also have an open door policy where I really encourage our staff to bring their ideas to me, to bring their issues and challenges so that we have a constant discussion around how we collectively take this wonderful platform of DIA forward and make it the best it can be. So collaboration is key.

Taren: Excellent. You talk about the success of the organization, how do you define success to yourself however? Where do you draw that personable sense of satisfaction?

Barbara: That kind of building on my other comments. I don't really define success kind of isolation. I see my role in the success that I can have in really helping other people reach their own goals and be successful. I've had a long career working with people who through work that we've done together I've seen them achieve new levels of success and they've gone on and had been top of their game in their own right. So for me my success is internal linked with the people around me.

Ultimately at the end of the day the reason I've moved my career into healthcare space is I want to be able to think that somehow through the energy that I put into it, through the work that I do and I help the people around me do, support them to do that we're making that difference to other people's lives. I think that personal satisfaction that you can get from seeing that the energy and effort that you put into your career has real value for other people and there's nothing better than that. I've discovered that early in my career.

I think that's so critical to the feeling that you get in a job that you do everyday and I've really encouraged people around me whether it's our staff or our volunteers to really focus on mission, the mission of DIA which is really to share that knowledge, to accelerate therapeutic development, that really speaks to me. It's why I came to DIA and I think that's really a critical element of the success that I think about when I think about my time here as a leader of this organization.

Taren: Speaking about a long career, you joined DIA from Battelle. What was the one thing or if there was more than one thing that made you take that leap? Was it that drive to make a difference in the lives of patients?

Barbara: Yeah. It's very interesting. I had such a phenomenal experience at Battelle leading the health and life science space globally. We worked in that role with people who wanted to do collaborative research from of course public and private organizations. What I found is working with the government for example, the NIAs or the FDA or CDC or the NHS in the UK, I learned a lot about how government see health research and how that contrasted with my

experience in industry and it really opened my eyes to the broader issues that were really getting in the way of making the progress that everybody was aspiring to make.

What I found was I would sometimes talk with one organization and they were trying to solve a problem that I knew darn well was also being worked on by two or three other organizations. So it really helped me to crystallize that some of the things that we needed to do as a healthcare community was to open up a dialogue and to try to work across the system and not stay too tightly in our silos. So when the DIA opportunity came to me I thought to myself what an amazing opportunity to try to make impact at the system level and to help people see and experience where the connection points could be for reaching that ultimate goal of getting medicines to patients faster. So that's what made me come to DIA and I'm just so happy I did.

Taren: Those are great insights. I couldn't agree with you more in terms of breaking down those silos and working cross collaboratively. I think it's more important than ever especially if we were to tackle some of those big diseases such Alzheimer's, some of those tough cancers that still need to be addressed. So I wish you continued success in making that happen.

Barbara: Thank you.

Taren: As we wind down, I'd like to know what's one piece of advice you would give to your younger self? What do you know now that you wish you knew then?

Barbara: I'm a pretty high activity, high energy individual and I go at things really hard and I remember early on somebody giving me this advice and I think I ignored it for awhile, but it became real for me probably just in the last several years of my career and that is to kind of like enjoy the journey, like slow down, appreciate all the challenges, the obstacles, the successes, the failures along the way and appreciate that even when you do something that doesn't work as you were hoping sometimes it's a major failure.

Stand back for a minute and appreciate the learning that you get from that. So a little bit of enjoy the journey. Don't think so much about the destination. Don't think so much about just the outcomes but the process along the way. And so I try to do that a lot more sort of intentionally now than I did in my earlier days and I think if I were going to redo it I would have that in my mind from the very beginning.

Taren: Excellent advice. And finally, you've had a long and journeyed career, can you identify one wow moment that maybe changed the trajectory of your career or that stands out to you as particularly significant?

Barbara: A lot of things that I think a lot about and I talk about this with my own two children with them as well is the idea of having a lifetime of service to others is really important. I

remember being in a job many, many years ago and I was in a reception or a meeting somewhere and a woman who I didn't know came over to me and saw my business card and she had sought me out. And she said to me, "I want to thank you because your company provided a scholarship that helped me to go to university and actually go to law school." And she was an attorney.

She said she was from a very depressed part of the United States. No one in her family had ever done that before but because she was able to get this financial support she was the first one who was able to come out and go to university and attain those credentials and obviously a career. And I thought to myself, wow, I mean I was at that point I was fairly early in my career I had no idea how this philanthropic side of what many, many, many organizations do how it really played itself out and it really made me think how important it was to – what's the old idiom, do well by doing good.

It really made me think although I was raised in a highly kind of service-oriented family, it really made me think that I wanted to ensure that the energy that I put into my career was having benefits for other people and so that really brought it home to me. And by the way, I'm the second in my family to go on to higher education, so maybe it was even more meaningful to see that we were doing that as an organization to help others also achieve those goals. I have espoused that philosophy to people around me.

I've talked about it from the time my two children were born and both of them have gone on to have meaningful careers which I'm very proud of. And so I think that my sort of moment would be to recognize the benefit of doing well by doing good.

Taren: That's amazing. Thank you so much for sharing that story and thank you so much for sharing so many of your insights with our audience. Thanks for being part of our WoW podcast program.

Barbara: Oh, thank you Taren. It's been my pleasure.

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