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In this episode, Taren Grom, Editor-in-Chief of PharmaVOICE Magazine meets with Heidi Hunter, President, Cardinal Health Specialty Solutions.

Taren: Heidi, welcome to the WoW podcast program.

Heidi: Thank you, Taren. I have to tell you that when I heard that you wanted me to come on to this program I was humbled and surprised. So it's great to be here. Thank you.

Taren: Well, it should be no surprise and that's very nice that you're humbled, but I am fascinated by your career journey, and I can't wait to dig in a little bit to that. I know you've worked globally for big public pharma companies and for private pharma companies covering a range of therapeutic categories. I also know that you've built several global teams. Talk to me about what are some of the most valuable lessons you have learned along the way.

Heidi: My career started over 25 years ago and it actually started in Basel, Switzerland. So my first role was in product management in Switzerland, and I learned a tremendous amount from there. I was on a management development track that took me to South Africa and after that I finally took my first role in the United States. So I've learned a lot about how important it is to be curious, how important it is to get to know the people you work with so that you really understand not just the culture of the company, but the culture of the people you work with and then also how to get really anything done in healthcare. It takes a team.

Taren: It definitely takes a team. That is for sure.

Heidi: It takes a team. Yeah.

Taren: Heidi, when I talk to other leaders in the industry and I ask about that global experience, they often say that it has provided them with a unique perspective. Would you say the same? And tell me how that global experience has maybe shaped your perspective.

Heidi: Sure. So I come from a global family. My dad is from Canada and my mom is from Germany. So when I was growing up I didn't really see the lines. It wasn't really a different place, but as I got more into business in the United States I really realized wow, there are other ways of thinking about how to create value in business and that's what intrigued me about working in other countries and looking at how do you create value in other countries. So I didn't just do it for sort of the one off or oh, this is different and adding to my life; it was really all part of the same journey and I would highly recommend it to anybody.

Taren: Do you think having a global experience is unnecessary to get into that C-suite or is it nice to have?

Heidi: I think it really depends on the business area that you're in although I really believe that people who have worked outside of the United States or outside of their home country, whatever that might be, that they bring a whole different perspective to issues and to leadership. So I would highly recommend it, but many people have been successful being in the same company for 20 years plus as well. So I really think that there's no one way that we gather our learnings that are required to really lead. I think each one of us is a bit different in that way.

Taren: Fantastic. Just a minute ago you also touched upon the need for great teams, what do you look for when you go to build a team? What are some of those traits or characteristics that your leads need to have to be part of one of your teams?

Heidi: That's a really good question. So I like to build teams and I really like to build teams often with people inside the organization. I think there is often a lot of talent in organizations that needs to be shown the experience of doing something new and then it brings double value to the organization. So what I often look for in people is first of all, curiosity and secondly, that they have this element of 'I have a dream.' And so if it's to be a CEO or they one day want to run their own company or they want to create the greatest NGO in a specific area that serves a need that's identified in their family and so when I'm telling you these examples I'm thinking of the people that have been leaders on my teams and so you want to see that desire for more and that curiosity and that lack of fear of failure and that's what I look for.

Taren: Excellent. I think those are all characteristics and a place that we all strive towards, so wonderful insights and advice. Talk to me a little bit about why the specialty pharma space particularly oncology has been a draw for you. There's a lot of therapeutic categories out there, why was this?

Heidi: Yeah. It's a good question. I've actually worked in a lot of therapeutic categories and so when I started my career it was in CNS and cardiovascular, so what was at the time fairly traditional large therapeutic areas and but over time I really realized the value of biologic therapies which then took me into oncology. And so what's pulled me throughout my career is again the curiosity around the science and how you connect the science to actually creating patient benefit and all that goes into it in between.

And so oncology in particular is an area where at the time you could see there's more than other therapeutic areas. I would say that's changed. Today, oncology is still very vibrant and we're really creating great new therapies that are allowing people to live better lives and longer lives, but other areas are really coming up as well such as immunology and of course the gene area, which will serve some of the genetic conditions that previously we thought were unsolvable. So it's really the science and really looking at that specific benefit for patients through the science.

Taren: Yeah, that's great. You've touched on a couple of times value and benefit, how do you define that value and benefit in terms of—

Heidi: Yeah.

Taren: One little question. I will say the question. How do we define that value and benefit then? I mean there's a lot of competing factors there.

Heidi: Yeah, yeah. In the end, you really have to focus on the patient and I know everybody probably is talking about that in your podcast, but it is really what drives me and it's not just didn't we help that patient. It has to be really a significant improvement over where those patients are today. And there are many areas where we can make those gains for patients and that's what, both in the development area as well as in the commercialization area of new therapies or innovations, that's what I look for.

Taren: Excellent. And while we all do tend to talk about patients, I don't think we can talk about patients enough. So that's...

Heidi: Me either. Me either.

Taren: That's perfectly fine. We've talked a lot about your experience in pharma and how is that shaping your role at Cardinal and how do you view your role at Cardinal?

Heidi: Thank you for that question. So having been in healthcare practically in my entire career, I was – I thought I'm familiar with Cardinal Health and in my mind they had an excellent reputation. But a few years ago I had the opportunity to work with them much more closely and I realized there's so much more here at Cardinal that I knew. Of course, I knew the excellent third party logistics of Cardinal and I knew that they had medical device and supply area, but there was so much I didn't know.

And so through that opportunity, I was really fortunate to get to know people within Cardinal and see how they focused on their customers to help their customers focus on the patient. So that was number one. Since coming to Cardinal, I've learned that Cardinal is uniquely focused on how they utilize their position in the market to actually take on disruptive innovation that can support the patient. So that's what really attracted me here, this idea that Cardinal and not just the idea, but really the reality like Cardinal sits at the crossroads of healthcare between the healthcare providers, the pharmaceuticals, the biotech companies, the payers and the patients and how to utilize that position to create additional value for patients. So that's what really attracted me.

Taren: Well, let's go on to that theme of innovation. What are some of the biggest trends you're currently tracking in the specialty pharma business? What should we be on the lookout for?

Heidi: So trends in pharma, so one, I think that is here now and we're all feeling at is really even more patient involvement in their own healthcare and I think as we look at that trend and begin to consider the impacts of that, that that will coincide with another shift in the market which is the specialty drug especially the specialty biologics moving to biosimilars as their patent life runs out. And I think as more patients become involved in their healthcare and created deeper understanding about the quality of biosimilars I think you're going to see that shift in the market that will be probably smoother than what those of us who remember the shift in the generic industry back in the 80s when that happened because we've learned so much from that experience, so patient involvement in their health and in their health to get quality care and value out of their healthcare dollar.

I think also in the area of healthcare delivery there is the trend towards more public private partnerships and I think there's no place that we see that better than what's currently happening in terms of the COVID therapy developments and of course the amazing vaccine developments that we've seen over the last year. We need each other sort of the public sphere and the private sphere to really make things happen, to create that value that we need in society for patient health. So I think that is also a trend that we will see more of, the public-private partnerships that's often talked about in healthcare is of course the growth in cell and gene therapies and here I think where we've only seen the tip of the iceberg not only when it comes to the cell and gene therapies, but also in their ability to impact patient care, patient longevity, the quality of patient's lives particularly as I mentioned earlier in areas that we thought we would never conquer.

So there it's only the beginning and that of course leads to challenging opportunities for businesses like Cardinal Health where we look at how can we support with the logistics, the distribution, the reimbursement in the patient journey so that these therapies are actually utilized where they should be. So probably the last one because I look at a lot of trends and Marsha knows this, but that I really am passionate about is data enablement. I think in healthcare despite everything that we're doing around electronic medical records and analyzing how best to serve patients in a certain therapeutic groups so they have the best outcomes, we've really there also only touched the tip of the iceberg to use augmented intelligence to really support how we deliver care. And this goes beyond telemedicine and it really goes into looking at how do we manage different patients to get the best outcomes.

Taren: So is that almost an extension into real world data, real world evidence then?

Heidi: It could be. I mean that's a big term, real world evidence and it means many things to many people. I think we're seeing a lot more in the clinical development sphere with patient outcomes being measured beyond the clinical outcomes and I think that's really important. What is developing now as well is the acknowledgement that real world data is supportive of clinical data and maybe supportive of the risk benefit of the clinical data. And so I think that's what we're seeing more and more of what the power of the data can do.

Taren: And that ties back to your concepts around value and benefit to patients because without that data supporting those clinical outcomes we don't extend the patients nor the system really derives the benefit from that particular therapy.

Heidi: Right. Right. You're exactly right. I think in the past we would always look for is my efficacy greater than the other guy's efficacy or my side effects last and efficacy just a little bit more and those are very important parameters to look at, but beyond that we really have to look at how is it affecting the patient's life, how long does the effect last, how do we perhaps taper the therapy to allow the patient potentially to live drug-free and all these things come from real world evidence.

Taren: Excellent. To switch tacks just a little bit, let's talk about how you're leading the company right now, your new – you're in the role, so how are you setting the strategic direction for Cardinal?

Heidi: Yeah. So I started at Cardinal just over four months ago and so I started during the pandemic.

Taren: Crazy, right?

Heidi: Yeah. Computer is my friend I have to say. So I've learned a lot about being on camera all the time. It's kind of refreshing now to be on camera right now and I think that many of the things that worked in person can work over Zoom and the first one is though that you have to establish that relationship. And we were talking about that earlier a little bit that now most of our relationships are through Zoom and those relationships can actually be quite deep and intense and almost jarring when you meet the person in person if you've only met them through Zoom. So what I try to do is through those meetings, really establish trust, that is the foundation of leadership I believe is to have the trust of your leaders and especially your teams along the way and everything then emanates from there. So I think once you tell them you're going to trust them from the beginning and if they make mistakes you still trust them, then you have to start to build that inclusivity around that trust and that builds trust. So through the inclusivity, transparency and giving trust first that's normally how I lead.

Taren: Great advice. You have obviously had ascending roles of responsibility leading up to your current role, what are some pieces of advice you might share with other women who are looking to ascend to that C-suite? Are there some things that you have learned or tips along the way that you can share with us?

Heidi: Sure. I don't think it's the same for everyone and even though I really enjoy what I'm doing right now and it's energizing for me, this might not be what everybody wants. But I think what's really important is to follow your curiosity and always make the most of it. And in my case, I was always drawn to the tough projects and I actually earlier in my career I had people say to me, why are you taking those tough projects like they could fail. And for some reason and maybe it was naiveté I was not worried about that. I really wanted to see could we crack that, can we actually develop a business around that and through doing those tough projects I

learned a tremendous amount about the industry and how different parts of the industry really ticked differently and how you need to understand the environments around healthcare as well as healthcare itself to get things done and to have things be successful.

So I think if I was going to give advice to anyone is definitely follow your curiosity and always try to be thinking how do I relate that back to creating value for patients. This is one of the reasons I became involved in biosimilars so deeply when I worked with Boeringer Ingelheim. I really believed that those are excellent therapeutics that can benefit patients greatly and relieve some of the costs in healthcare system and open up space for further innovation. So if I'm giving advice, I would say it doesn't have to all look perfect, that's one. You don't have to look perfect all the time. You need to show grit and ability to engage and team with others and I would say always be thinking about what is possible and not just all the things that are going to hold an opportunity back.

Taren: I was chuckling when you said, when you were talking about well the project could fail and I thought, but the project could succeed too.

Heidi: Exactly. Exactly. Yeah. I agree. I agree.

Taren: That's the beauty of it. Those are those half glass full people and then the glass half empty people, so now—

Heidi: Yeah. And every time I was in the bigger companies, and I think in the bigger companies – and this 15, 20 years ago, people were cautious. We need more of that fire of innovation no matter where people are. Also in the big companies and it's definitely at Cardinal, I really feel there is that fire, but we need it throughout the industry and I really believe we've seen it with the vaccine development now that I'm in awe of what they've done.

Taren: I agree.

Heidi: So I know we've got it.

Taren: I agree. I think we've seen companies that have been traditionally so conservative really stepped out of their comfort zones completely and take some very big strategic and calculated risks and I know risk by putting a patient at risk, but really challenging their internal operations and development protocols to move as quickly as possible. So it has been very impressive.

Heidi: Yeah, yeah. It's really set a new bar of the art of the possible.

Taren: Exactly.

Heidi: Yeah.

Taren: Exactly. And I talked to a lot of people saying is this phase, is it sustainable and everything, I don't know about that, but we've always can't go back to the way things were either totally. So there's some silver linings there I guess.

Heidi: Yeah, absolutely. I also know that you serve in the board of Vicore Pharma, why is it important for you to speak out and hold board positions? What does that mean for you in your career?

Heidi: Well, first of all, when I first thought I wanted to look at boards it was really to guide the innovation and that was probably the wrong perspective to have. I think now for me the experience of being on a board is much more about taking this whole idea of how business is governed and leadership is supported to a different level and so that's why now I think it's really important to be on boards it's to help leaders and support leaders to really ask the right questions of their teams and work as a support for them. Of course, you have audit committees and risk that you're managing as well as governance, but it's really important to look at how do you help guide without getting your fingers dirty in there because that's the job of the CEO. It's a great perspective and I really highly recommend it for anybody who wants to get into a C-suite role because when you're in the C-suite, you're communicating with the board a lot.

What's important is to really learn and understand the perspective of the board and how they want to support you to guide the company, and support you and challenge you to guide the company and in that challenge is really what you need. So I think words are in that way very educational for young executives and I think for others, they can be a challenge and that challenge is what we need from each other to keep each other fresh and on our toes. There's a lot of discussion about there should be more women in the boardroom and of course I absolutely believe that.

The boardroom should be very representative of society whenever possible and then we will have a much more holistic and thoughtful conversation around business and how to move business forward on behalf of society.

Taren: Couldn't agree with you more, perfectly stated. And Heidi finally, because this is our WoW podcast, tell me about an accomplishment or a wow moment that either shaped or changed the trajectory of your career?

Heidi: I think one great moment was when I was given the opportunity – and this will round back to what we talked about earlier, to take on a team of people who in the oncology area and to really learn how to shape a business and so at the time I had a really large P&L and I moved to the oncology business and it was a much smaller P&L and what really shaped me there was I learned that your impact is not necessarily based on the size of your P&L, that your impact is much more about how you go about your work and what you do with those teams. And it was really through that opportunity, that first opportunity in oncology that I learned that.

Taren: Fabulous. Well Heidi, thank you so much for spending some time with us for our podcast program and thank you so much also for sharing such great insights about your career



journey, the value and benefit that we should all be looking toward to bring to patients and your commitment to patients. It's been delightful speaking with you. Thank you so much.

Heidi: Thank you for the opportunity Taren.

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