

Clark: a mentor doing the right thing

Ian Clark, Genentech's CEO and head of North American commercial operations, is this year's Healthcare Businesswomen's Association (HBA) Honorable Mentor. He was nominated on behalf of Genentech Women Professionals (GWP) group, which he has helped support and expand.

"He has a vision of how diversity in general impacts business," explains Carol Wells, senior director for commercial training and development at Genentech and president of HBA's San Francisco Chapter. "That's included a gender piece. A big initiative he's had is to expand the GWP group, which provides networking, mentoring and development opportunities for women at all levels."

GWP launched about five years ago and now has more than 1,000 members. It's one of eight diversity network associations within Genentech. Clark believes a balanced, diverse workforce creates a better work environment and stronger, more successful companies. Advancing women, he says, is not only "fair" and "the right thing to do," it's also imperative given demographic trends in higher education.

"It's an industry in which people are typically highly educated," Clark explains. "Back in time, there were more men qualifying for advanced degrees than women. Today it's 60% women and 40% men qualifying for college degrees. Post-graduate in science is now 50/50. If we don't advance women, we're fishing in a smaller and smaller pool. If you don't recruit and advance women, you'll have a weaker workforce."

Though Clark believes Genentech is making "very good progress," and the broader industry is making "reasonable progress," he says there's still more to be done—especially at senior levels.

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Ian Clark
CEO, Genentech

2003–present
SVP/GM to CEO/head of NA commercial ops, Genentech

1999–2002
COO, Novartis UK to president, Novartis Canada

1998–1999
VP business development and international operations, Ivax



grams. Women-oriented programs help. There's value in like-minded women addressing issues that are often mutual. It's helped us in many ways."

Issues specific to women, he says, include self-confidence and work/life balance. About four years ago, after discussing best mentoring practices with the HBA, Genentech began to ensure that junior- and mid-level employees were paired with senior-level leaders. "HBA's stance was a lot of women in their early mid-career get to a point that they're not certain they'll succeed or that they can make the balance work," says Clark. "Having a connection with a considerably senior person who has succeeded is beneficial."

Clark finds mentoring is "not dissimilar to the concept of teaching," and he's proud that he's been able to "play a small part" in helping people succeed, including some who are leading companies today.

"Whenever you finish a time or role in many ways your legacy is the people you leave behind," he adds. "Businesses come and go, but if you grow good leaders they'll lead. The same is true of mentoring."

A biologist by training, Clark was drawn to pharma because he wanted to work in an industry that had "a sense of purpose and meaning" where he could contribute something of value.

When not working, Clark's three teenage daughters keep him busy. He enjoys sports, including surfing, skiing and soccer, and loves reading, especially history. He confesses "a slight weakness for cars" and appreciates wine.

Clark, a Brit, worked in a number of different countries early in his career. Opportunities drew him "gradually westward" to Canada, where he served as president of Novartis Canada before joining Genentech and settling in northern California in 2003.

He believes global experience helps cultivate appreciation of diversity. "You learn to judge less by immediate interactions and appearance," he explains. "In general, the US is doing pretty good in terms of diversity in the workplace." — Tanya Lewis

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