



## Working Life

Dr Zubair Hussain, head of regulatory affairs, UK and Ireland, Pfizer

### How did you get into your current role?

After completing my D.Phil at Oxford, I looked for an opportunity in regulatory affairs, and found a job with Wyeth in international regulatory affairs. I worked on a hypnotic for registration in Europe, was involved in all the development activities, and saw it through to approval via the newly established centralised procedure. As a result, I was asked to take on another product in a different therapy area - an immunosuppressant. In total I spent five and a half years at Wyeth.

This is where I learnt my bread and butter regulatory skills. Also, I wanted to develop my management skills, and found an opportunity with what was then Pharmacia & Upjohn and later became Pharmacia after an integration with Monsanto Searle. I went on to become head of the UK regulatory affairs department.

After about three years Pfizer took over, and on 1 June 2003 I became head of regulatory affairs and quality standards at Pfizer. In 2007 after completion of an executive MBA at London Business School, and with the introduction of a new proactive approach towards managing risk across the business, I was also asked to lead the quality assurance and compliance team in the UK.

### How is your field changing?

Regulatory hurdles seem to be increasing in every element of drug development. Speed to regulatory/pricing approval remains important when patent shelf life is limited. A delay to the market place will also delay delivery of an important new medicine to the patient. Another factor in speed is diversion of valuable resources to candidates that are eventually unsuccessful. There is now an increasing trend of more critical evaluation and early attrition. Regulatory affairs has an important part to play here.

Proactive risk management is essential to help companies understand the risks that affect the business and how to prepare for inevitable inspections from regulatory agencies.

Operational excellence in compliance could be the competitive advantage of tomorrow. Protecting revenues is just as important as growing them!

### What do you enjoy most about your role?

I intend to continue providing leadership and developing people in the pharmaceutical industry. I am fortunate in that I have the autonomy to do this with over 40 people within Pfizer. I thrive on delivering health benefits to patients, shaping our environment and facing the challenge of improving the reputation of our industry.

### And what do you enjoy least?

Being stuck in traffic during my long journey in to work.

### What are the most common misconceptions about your field and the people in it?

Most people don't understand the concept of benefit/risk very well. Members of the public are possibly misled by the media regarding

safety issues as they are often sensationalised.

People forget that the benefit/risk of a medicine is continuously being added to during its life cycle and thus it is understandable that, with experience and time, in some instances, the risk may exceed the benefit in certain populations or indications. The image of the industry as a whole is affected by this kind of misconception. These perceptions are likely to damage trust of the industry and I thus believe that the industry needs to proactively address and manage these criticisms.

### Is there anyone in your field from whom you have learnt a lot?

I have always learned a great deal from the people I work with, different things from different people. I have learnt a great deal from John Iman and Tessa Hennesy at Wyeth as well as Magnus Jaderburg (now Wyeth), Kevin Bridgman (now J&J) and David Gillen (Pfizer). I have also admired Brenton James (now consultant) and the inspiring way in which he led discussions with key regulators in Europe.

### Similarly, is there someone (or something) outside your field who inspires you?

My father who passed away about 11 years ago. He has been the biggest inspiration in my life. He made so many sacrifices for me to have time to study. He encouraged me to continue studying and not help out in his small grocery business that was not doing so well at the time. He instilled values in me then, which I still use every day.

### What is the secret to a happy working life?

Be passionate about what you do. Deliver and implement on time, and with energy. Lead, don't wait!

### If you had advice for anyone starting out in your field now, what would it be?

Research regulatory affairs and familiarise yourself with European pharmaceutical law. Know the industry that you are seeking to have a career in. What makes the industry tick and how could it be influenced by the changing environment?

### How do you relax and forget about work?

I play squash and like to spend time with friends and family.

### In an alternate life, what would you do for a living?

Be a builder or a pilot! I would love to build a house from scratch or pilot a commercial jet.

Dr Zubair Hussain has had a career in regulatory affairs spanning 14 years and is currently head of regulatory affairs, quality assurance and compliance (UK and Ireland) at Pfizer, where he has worked for five years.

Prior to working at Pfizer he worked at Pharmacia - later taken over by Pfizer - and Wyeth.

Dr Hussain is a director and board member of TOPRA (The Organisation for Professionals in Regulatory Affairs). He is a qualified pharmacist, has a D.Phil (PhD) from Oxford University and an MBA from the London Business School.

If you would like to contribute to a future Working Life, please contact Martin Maynard via e-mail at: [mmaynard@wiley.com](mailto:mmaynard@wiley.com)