

MOVERS

Alan Lewis, president and chief executive, Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation, New York



2006-08: President and chief executive, Novocell, San Diego, California

2000-06: President, Signal division of Celgene, San Diego, California

1994-2000: President and chief executive, Signal Pharmaceuticals, San Diego, California

Alan Lewis's enthusiasm for drug hunting and a desire to work at the forefront of science have seen him chart a 36-year career in the drug industry. As the next head of the Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation (JDRF) in New York, he plans to use his industry ties to help bring novel treatments for type 1 diabetes to market quickly.

Lewis, whose father was a pharmacist in Wales, studied biochemistry and physiology at the University of Southampton, UK, but was most excited by his pharmacology course. He did a PhD in pharmacology at the University of Wales Institute in Cardiff, and then studied as a postdoc at the University of Guelph in Ontario, Canada, where he worked on animal models of asthma.

It was visa troubles rather than science that proved pivotal in Lewis's next career move. His wife's visa problems cut short his stay as a research associate at Yale University, but led to new opportunities. Lewis decided to join industry, first at Netherlands-based drug maker Organon Laboratories, where he designed drugs to suppress or augment the immune system. "I really loved the focus and directed-goal orientation of drug hunting," he says.

Lewis then joined Wyeth Pharmaceuticals in Princeton, New Jersey, where as vice-president of research he helped develop the antidepressant Effexor, an immunosuppressant used in transplant therapy. Buoyed by the potential of the biotechnology industry, Lewis moved to Signal Pharmaceuticals, a small company in San Diego, California, that he helped grow from 9 to 90 people. Still energized with entrepreneurial zeal, Lewis joined Novocell, also in San Diego, which develops insulin-producing cells from embryonic stem cells to treat diabetes.

Leading the nonprofit JDRF is part of a natural career progression, says Lewis. "Passion drives what we do at industry — and at non-profits," he says. Steven Gilman, chief scientific of Cubist Pharmaceuticals in Lexington, Massachusetts, was initially surprised that Lewis was leaving industry, but says it makes sense given his drive to develop treatments. "Alan's passion for making an impact on patients' lives is evident to all who know him, and he'll use that to help the JDRF work towards new treatments," says Gilman.

And with the industry exploring ways to develop an artificial pancreas that can control blood glucose levels, Lewis is optimistic that better treatments for type 1 diabetes are not far away.

Virginia Gewin

NETWORKS & SUPPORT

Age versus talent in India

Indian prime minister Manmohan Singh is looking for talented young scientists. He told 4,000 scientists at the annual Science Congress in Shillong, Meghalaya, on 3 January that Indian science needed "a new generation of role models and leaders".

Despite government efforts, he said, Indian science is lagging behind not just developed nations, but also newly industrialized states such as China.

A bias towards seniority is the norm in India, says Jayaraman Gowrishankar, director of the Centre for DNA Fingerprinting and Diagnostics in Hyderabad. Finding young leaders is not easy, as the average age of scientists in national laboratories is close to 50. However, says Thirumalachari Ramasamy, president of the Science Congress, "identifying younger talent is possible if selection committees heed Singh's advice".

Gifted students are increasingly seeking better-paying fields outside science, exacerbating a brain drain to the West that has continued since the 1970s. This has created a vacuum in mid-career positions, says C. N. R. Rao, science adviser to Singh.

But this may be about to change. India's education and science ministries have increased fellowship money by 50%. Last month, Singh launched a five-year, 21-billion-

rupee (US\$427-million) scholarship programme for a million 10-15-year-olds, whose funding can continue through graduate school as long as they continue with science. And a new programme called INSPIRE (innovation in science pursuit for inspired research) is to give selected new PhDs five-year government or university research positions.

Still, it will take time for a new crop of scientists to emerge, says Govindarajan Padmanaban, former director of the Indian Institute of Science (IISc) in Bangalore. The immediate challenge, he says, is to find thousands of new faculty members. He suggests that rules could be relaxed to recruit fresh PhDs and the retirement age be raised from 60 to 65.

A Global Indian Network of Knowledge initiative, announced on 8 January, will let expatriates who have given up Indian citizenship return more easily by acquiring an Overseas Citizenship of India card. The government has so far issued nearly 350,000 cards.

This, however, is unlikely to affect top institutions such as the IISc that already attract expatriates. "I do not believe we have enough committed Indians abroad wanting to return," says Padmanaban.

K. S. Jayaraman

POSTDOC JOURNAL

Zen science

The stark reality of balancing motherhood and a postdoc is about to hit me like an out-of-control truck. It was all planned. I would leave my toddler at home with his dad while I went on a workshop to discuss climate change and biodiversity. But just as I had successfully worked through the guilt of leaving my child, my partner was offered work in Papua New Guinea, at Aus\$700 (US\$460) a day for a month. We are both looking for new postdocs next year. He needs the work experience and we need the money. Now my first real academic outing in two-and-a-half-years includes an entourage: my toddler and my mother-in-law.

I expect that the next year, and future years, will include similar challenges if I wish to continue down the academic path. So far, I have been lucky. For the past three years, my postdoc has been part-time; I have three days a week to play Earth Mother and be a good influence on my son. My success is questionable, however; I have a child that looks like a cherub but swears like a sailor.

I doubt if this can continue. Part-time postdocs are rather rare. Over the next 12 months I have to find another postdoc, or (gulp), a real job. Or, I need to consider the alternative: more child-friendly career options. I aim to take a Zen approach to 2009, accepting each challenge as an opportunity to grow, while I strive for a happy work-family balance.

Joanne Isaac is a postdoc in climate-change effects on biodiversity at James Cook University in Townsville, Australia.