

Alumni Stories " >

Inspiring Leaders, Outstanding Contributors

Novartis Alumni have inspiring stories and we applaud their achievements and personal growth as they continue to make an impact on business, society and human health.

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Thousands of terminally ill oncology patients were touched by the contribution of Novartis Alumni Pascal Touchon during his 4 year tenure at Novartis. Familiar to many Novartians, Pascal started as a member of the Oncology Executive Committee leading the oncology BD&L and Strategy team with many achievements including the acquisition of crizanlizumab (Adakveo) and that of AAA. Then Pascal led the cell and gene franchise which helped get Kymriah approved and launched in the US, Europe, Canada, Australia and Japan.

In 2019 Pascal joined US based biotech Atara Biotherapeutics as CEO & President. With a focus on allogeneic T-cell immunotherapy, Atara allows Pascal to remain focused on patients with serious diseases and on transforming lives. The business of 'life' can be hard and complex requiring resilience and passion which Novartis taught him. Welcome to the Novartis Alumni Pascal it's great to connect with you again.

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Between 2002 and 2018, Isabel Afonso worked in 9 different roles across both Sandoz and Novartis. After leaving the group in 2018 Isabel became Chief Commercial Officer for US based company Performance Health, the largest global manufacturer and distributor of products to the rehabilitation and sports medicine markets. A life-long learner, Isabel has always looked for growth opportunities, and believes that investing in oneself. With a background in IT, Isabel holds qualifications from Harvard, Wharton and a General Management program from INSEAD.

Recently we welcomed Isabel back into the Novartis family when she re-joined as Head of Portfolio and Strategy for Novartis Oncology China, was acting head for Commercial Excellence and Digital and in November 2021 was appointed General Manager, Novartis Oncology China. Isabel is a global executive with broad experience in leading and turning around businesses in large corporations, private equity, as well as start-up environment. She has high energy, a curious mindset with demonstrated learning agility, and is known for inspiring and positively disrupting teams and businesses to deliver high growth and impact in multi-cultural environments.

Welcome back to the Novartis family Isabel!

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Between 2005 and 2010 Richard Saynor held several regional leadership roles with Sandoz. He left Sandoz in 2010 to take up a global leadership role at GSK heading their classic and established medicines division based in Singapore. Even though Richard left Sandoz, he took with him a deep love for the company and its purpose - to pioneer access for patients - and when after eight years the opportunity arose to return to the company as CEO, he jumped at the chance. On his first day addressing Sandoz as the new CEO, he told the assembled associates that "this is my dream job." Returning to Sandoz was a big step, and Richard brought

with him a wealth of experience and a bold ambition: to make Sandoz both a market leader and thought leader, encouraging a “generic mindset” and increasing patients’ access to therapy as a vital part of the overall Novartis purpose of reimagining medicine.

Under his leadership, 75% of all the medicines supplied by Novartis are Sandoz medicines and includes biosimilars and generic cancer therapies. Richard was behind critical moves to secure patient access during 2020 including an industry-leading pledge to keep prices stable for many essential medicines during the Coronavirus Pandemic and with the announcement of a joint investment to secure the long-term future of antibiotics manufacturing in Europe. This resulted from Sandoz's intensive efforts to broker an unprecedented cross-sector initiative that will maintain supplies of critical medicines to customers and patients worldwide.

Welcome back to the Novartis family Richard!

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Sarah Egan, a familiar face to many of you, worked across the HR organisation during her 10 years with Novartis.

Today, Sarah is the Chief HR Officer for Swiss Pharmaceutical company Acino, focused on servicing new and emerging markets with quality medicines. A life-long learner Sarah has always looked for stretch opportunities taking her outside of her comfort zone. During her time at Novartis she held roles at cluster, regional and global level, working across talent acquisition, talent management and HR (now People and Organization). Her proudest moments were during her time working across Asia Pacific, Middle East and Africa, focused on how Novartis could drive purpose and impact in smaller markets efficiently. Having such breadth and depth of experience gave Sarah the rhythm and rigor of HR and truly tested her leadership skills which has set her up well for her current role.

Sarah lives her purpose and recommends others to follow what you love, choosing passion and value because in Pharma our passion saves lives! Good to see you again Sarah and welcome to the Novartis Alumni Network!

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List of links present in page

- <https://www.novartis.com/careers/novartis-alumni/alumni-stories>