Novartis Pharmaceuticals UK
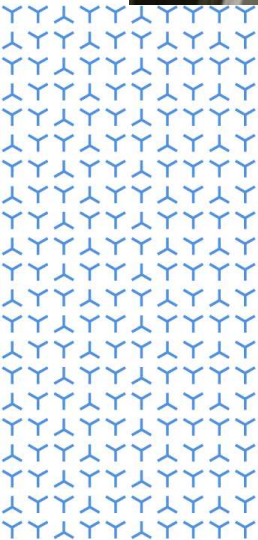UK & Ireland VAN

Experience Sharing

Evanthia Koukouli, PhD
EFSPI Stats Leaders Meeting 2023
May 23, 2023

Disclaimer

- This presentation is based on publicly available information (including data relating to non-Novartis products or approaches).

- The views presented are the views of the presenter, not necessarily those of Novartis.

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My journey

Academic Experience:

- BSc in Mathematics, National & Kapodistrian University of Athens, Greece

- MSc and PhD in Statistics, Lancaster University, UK

- PhD Thesis (2022): "Statistical Methods for Modelling Complex Longitudinal Data with Applications in Cancer Pharmacogenetics and Ageing"

- Graduate Teaching Assistant for the duration of my PhD

Working in Industry:

- Biostatistics Internship at Roche (2020)

- Principal Biostatistician at Novartis since March 2022 (London, UK)
  - Joined the UK & Ireland Virtual Analytics Network (VAN): complete three 5-month rotations before getting assigned to my permanent role (July 2023)

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My VAN rotations

Renal

- Trial Statistician to design a Ph3b study
- Protocol & SAP writing
- Side projects included performing code validations, handling ADaM datasets, performing data explorations of precedent trials
- Meetings & collaboration with CTT members

Neuroscience

- Research project where I handled external data sets to inform decision making for the design of a Ph2 trial
- Very close collaboration with clinicians; open discussions where statistical outputs drove team's decisions for the design of the trial

Statistical Methodology (Oncology)

- Support Oncology through investigating a variety of statistical methodologies to address key trial issues
- Consultation meetings with internal and external experts
- Collaboration with very senior statisticians

Understanding the decision making process from a business perspective

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Perception of our role as statisticians

Before I joined pharma...

- ✓ Strong **technical background**, including coding
- ✓ The statistician is the one who derives data driven conclusions to **inform** the scientific community (or stakeholders)

After 1 year working within pharma...

- ✓ Critical role of statisticians in **drug development**
- ✓ Our role is not only limited to implementing complex statistical methods but also getting actively involved into the **decision making process** to drive strategic business decisions
- ✓ Communication & collaboration skills, adaptability, resilience and problem solving skills are key

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Becoming influential

How can our structured thinking and quantitative skills be utilized to support drug development?

Communication skills
(presenting to a diverse audience, communicating ideas to clinicians, etc.)

Business knowledge
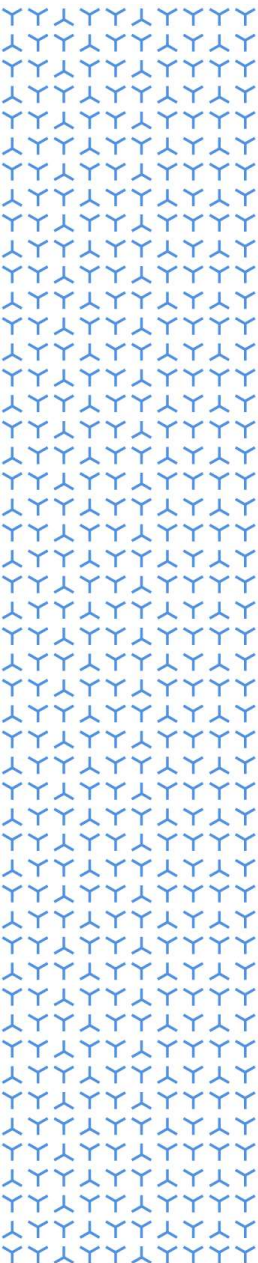(deep understanding of drug development)

Technical skills
(the fundamentals are usually provided through our education; company courses help to stay current in the field)

Leadership skills

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Support ideas

- Allow junior statisticians to gain diverse experiences early
  - Increase junior statisticians' visibility within the company, may create new collaboration opportunities, increase their appreciation and recognition of colleagues' work; also, will broaden their perspective
  - Can help to get the right talent in the right role
  - Getting experience from working at different stages of drug development or disease areas is critical

- Opportunities for direct collaboration with statistical leaders

- A structured mentorship

- Create open channel of communication with leaders; "frequent" meetings (e.g., twice/three times per year) for experience sharing

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Thank you

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