



12 Questions with Meg Hooton



Meg Hooton, President of IQVIA Biotech, leads the organisation, providing clinical development solutions for biotech and emerging biopharma clients. With over 30 years of global R&D and operational experience, she holds a postgraduate nursing degree in Intensive and Coronary Care and a Bachelor's in Asian Studies from Monash University, Australia. Her journey from nursing to leadership showcases her commitment to advancing healthcare through clinical research, making her an invaluable asset to both the industry and IQVIA Biotech.

What is your background prior to this role and how did it prepare you for the work you do now? My background in clinical research spans 30 years, beginning my career in the public sector as a registered nurse with my first foray into clinical research. Over the years, I've held various roles in academia, as well as the pharmaceutical industry, and latterly contract research organisations, with eight years in the Royal Australian Navy Reserve. My journey began in Melbourne, Australia, taking me throughout various countries in the Asia Pacific region, before I landed on the East Coast of the United States. In 2017, I became the global therapeutic head of oncology for IQVIA, thereafter joining IQVIA Biotech in 2021 as chief operating officer and later president. My diverse experience in clinical development and the military over the past three decades have prepared me well to lead research and development at IQVIA Biotech.



What is your proudest professional accomplishment to date? Reflecting on my career, this would have to be taking innovative, life-changing drugs to market. These achievements stand out because it involved overcoming significant challenges in the development process, regulatory approvals, in addition to the contribution of my team of talented drug development professionals and collaboration of many inspirational clients. My experience has been incredibly rewarding and continues to inspire me on my professional journey, reinforcing my commitment to improving patient care and advancing healthcare.

What motivates you about working in pharma? With my clinical and medical background, I'm driven by altruism and the opportunity to provide more treatment options to patients worldwide.

What do you see as the biggest challenges facing the industry right now? Right now, it is cost pressures. Lingering inflation, the cost of capital, and continuous pressure to reduce the rising cost of developing medicines is impacting clinical trials.

What excites you most about current industry trends? The integration of artificial intelligence (AI) and big data analytics. These technologies are revolutionising various aspects of drug discovery and development by enabling more efficient data processing, predictive modelling, and personalised medicine.

How do you promote patient-centricity in your workplace? There are several key strategies we employ to ensure patients' needs, experiences, and perspectives are at the forefront of the research process. Firstly, clear communication about clinical trials to help patients make informed decisions. Secondly, flexible trial designs, with options for telehealth visits, home visits, or concierge services to make participation more convenient and less burdensome. Lastly, the application of technology through wearable devices and mobile apps to collect data remotely, reducing the need for site visits and making it easier for patients to participate.

What has changed most about the industry since the start of your career? The industry has significantly evolved since I started my career and will continue to do so for decades to come. Advances in biotechnology and personalised medicine have revolutionised treatment options, particularly for complex diseases. The integration of technology has streamlined drug discovery, clinical trials, and patient care. The industry has become more global, with increased collaboration across countries, with regulators having stricter guidelines and faster approval processes for innovative therapies.

What do you think pharma will look like in 15 years? 50 years? In the next 15 to 50 years, we will witness greater personalised medicine, advances in genomics and biotechnology will enable highly personalised treatments tailored for individual genetic profiles. Integrated healthcare solutions, also; we will move beyond drugs to integrated medical devices, digital health tools, and AI driven diagnostics. Efforts to ensure equitable access to healthcare globally will be more advanced, too, leading to global health equity with innovative distribution models and affordable treatments.



What advice would you give to a young person starting out in your field? A career in the pharmaceutical industry can be both challenging and highly rewarding, offering a unique blend of scientific innovation, professional development, and the chance to make a meaningful difference to people's lives. My advice is to stay curious, keep learning, build a strong knowledge base and network actively.

How do you manage health, fitness, and wellness in your life? I have been an ardent practitioner of yoga for the past 15 years. Yoga is a universal practice that transcends cultural and language differences and connects communities globally. Its holistic approach to health makes it a great practice for me to stay fit, flexible, and balanced.

What's your best celebrity meeting story? I was recently at an event at the Javits Centre in New York, where by chance we had the opportunity to be part of a small audience for an interview with the American rapper and songwriter Travis Scott. The interview ended with an "impromptu" performance: the experience was unique and unforgettable.

What is your dream vacation? My dream vacation involves travelling to a less-visited country, discovering a national park or historical site, and exploring by hiking or cycling. I love immersing myself in challenging situations where I don't speak the language, am unfamiliar with the food, and the area isn't crowded with tourists. This kind of adventure allows me to truly experience the culture and beauty of the destination.

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