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Why CEOs need advanced education and training for optimizing decisions in the development of innovative medicinal products? Justification and recommendation

CEOs (chief executive officers) of innovative pharmaceutical companies usually are well educated and trained in business management, executive decision-making, marketing, finance and human resources. However, only seldom CEOs and upper management have been trained to specifically understand the skills and languages used by their R&D (research and development) and RA (regulatory affairs) staff. The lack of CEO training in R&D and RA can lead to miscommunication and inefficiencies in the drug development process, because in the world of pharmaceutical innovation, CEOs are required not only to steer organizational vision but also to navigate the complex scientific, regulatory, and commercial challenges that shape the development of novel medicines. Advanced education and continuous training in R&D topics may therefore equip CEOs with a nuanced understanding of the finesses inherent to medicinal product development—ranging from early-stage discovery, preclinical and clinical development to regulatory requirements. Such expertise enables CEOs to engage more effectively with multidisciplinary R&D and RA teams, critically evaluate the scientific validity and commercial potential of projects and make high-stakes decisions that balance scientific opportunity against financial and operational constraints. CEOs and upper management often take final decisions from the above. A better understanding of the language and foundations of RA people and R&D scientists would help them ease knowledge-based decisions. This is especially important regarding the well-founded start, the strong support or even the necessary discontinuation of innovative R&D projects. The final goal of advanced education and continuous training of CEOs would be to improve the overall success rate of internal R&D projects in the pharmaceutical industry, thereby improving the use of the tremendous investments made.

Keywords

CEO, upper management, training, education, R&D

Biography

PD Dr. Peter-Jürgen Kramer is a distinguished toxicologist with an extensive academic and industrial career. He earned his Biochemistry Diploma and completed his doctorate at the University of Tübingen in collaboration with ETH Zurich, Switzerland. Following a Postdoctoral Fellowship at the University Hospital Basel, he joined Merck Darmstadt's Institute of Toxicology, where he later became Head of the Institute. He subsequently served as Global Head of Toxicology and Safety Pharmacology and Vice-President at Merck.

Dr. Kramer is also an active academic lecturer, having taught at the Technical University Darmstadt, the University of Bonn, and Université Lyon. His expertise spans toxicology, safety pharmacology, and biochemical research, contributing significantly to both scientific education and industry innovation.