

Kavita Iyer Rodrigues receives BioSpectrum Entrepreneur of the Year Award 2020

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Kavita Iyer Rodrigues, Chief Executive Officer, Zumutor Biologics has been presented with BioSpectrum Entrepreneur of the Year 2020 for her ability to raise funds for drug discovery activities at her firm and leading to a company with appropriate measures and strategic steps in 2019-20, at a virtual ceremony held in March 2021. The ceremony witnessed with the participation of over 200 industry leaders from across the country.

In her acceptance speech, Kavita said “Zumutor is an immuno-company in the novel antibody space. We have a novel platform and antibodies in our pipeline getting into various regulatory submissions later this year.”

After earning an MS in Medical Microbiology from Manipal Academy of Higher Education, Kavita Iyer started her career as a scientist in Biocon in 2003. After working there for less than two years, she worked as Process Development Scientist at Millipore and as Project Manager, Virus Validation- Biologics at Avesthagen. Equipped with the knowledge of different aspects related to biologics, the urge to become an entrepreneur motivated her to start Inbiopro, a global biotechnology enterprise in 2007 along with Sohng Chatterjee. In 2010 Strides Arcolab had acquired 70 per cent in Accel Partners-backed Inbiopro Solutions. This success encouraged Kavita to start Theramyt Novobiologics, a niche Biosimilar to the Biobetter development enterprise in 2012.

Backed by industry experience of 12 years and deep domain expertise along with strong business skills, Kavita, in 2015, started Zumutor Biologics focussing on developing targeted natural killer (NK) cell therapeutics. In a short span of time, under her leadership, the company has grown to a 25-strong science team that works seamlessly with a world-renowned scientific advisory board with expertise in immuno-oncology and clinical development. The company's assets include a pipeline of immuno-oncotherapeutics molecules, two proprietary antibody discovery platforms and a robust IP portfolio with a landscape beyond 2034. Zumutor had raised \$4 million (approximately Rs 28.65 crore at current exchange rates) in fresh funding in 2019. With this, the total funding raised by Zumutor has hit \$20 million.

Besides the Entrepreneur of the year award, a panel of the jury chaired by Dr Renu Swarup Secretary, Department of Biotechnology (DBT), Government of India, has selected other awards namely – Life Time Achievement Award, Business

Person of the year Award, Woman Entrepreneur of the year award and Product of the year award at a meeting held at her office in February 2020.

The jury panel includes Utkarsh Palnitkar, Founder & Managing Partner, Aarna Corporate Advisors, US; Dr Gagandeep Kang, the then Executive Director, Translational Health Science & Technology Institute (THSTI), New Delhi (she is now Professor of Microbiology, at the Wellcome Trust Research Laboratory, Division of Gastrointestinal Sciences at the Christian Medical College (CMC) in Vellore) ; Deepanwita Chattopadhyay, Chairperson and CEO, IKP Knowledge Park, Hyderabad; and Dr Bhagirath Choudhary, Board member of APEDA, Ministry of Commerce & Industry and Founder Director, South Asia Biotechnology Centre (SABC), New Delhi.

Talking about the BioSpectrum Excellence Awards 2020, Ravi Boratkar, Managing Editor and Publisher, BioSpectrum India, MM Activ Sci-Tech Communications, New Delhi said “BioSpectrum awards as we know were constituted in 2003. Unfortunately, the awards ceremony was discontinued in between. However, we used to receive queries and calls. Finally, in 2019, we decided to keep up this good work and acknowledging, appreciating and awarding the exemplary work of individuals and companies in the respective fields with these awards. The actual BioSpectrum Awards Ceremony was organised at The LaLiT Ashok Bangalore, on March 27, 2020. But due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we were forced to cancel the ceremony. We hoped to do it at a later date. However now we realised that it will be a time for next year’s award. So we decided to go virtually. Hence we thought let’s come together and do this programme virtually.”