



Ashling Mulvaney

Senior Director of AstraZeneca pharmaceuticals
Healthy Heart Africa programme



Ashling Mulvaney works for AstraZeneca pharmaceuticals. She is Senior Director of the company's Healthy Heart Africa programme, with the aim of reaching 10 million hypertensive patients across Africa in the next ten years. This will support the WHO's global hypertension target of a 25 per cent reduction in hypertension prevalence by 2025 looking at sustainability and health care in Africa.

School life

Ashling grew up in Courthouse Green, Coventry, and attended St Elizabeth's Primary School, which at the time was a feeder school for Cardinal Wiseman Catholic School. She joined Cardinal Wiseman at a time when there was a separate boys and girls school before it merged in her second year. She studied for her GCSEs before attending the school's sixth form for her A-levels.

She said: "I had a fantastic time at Cardinal Wiseman, there was such a variety of subjects and the teachers were really supportive. We had careers fairs and our teachers actively encouraged us to attend the sixth form.

"One of the first teachers that I really bonded with was Mrs McGuinness who was my English teacher and she instilled my passion for English, particularly English literature. One of the things we did was go to the Royal Shakespeare Company which really opened my eyes to what education can allow you to do and what you can experience. Mr Giles taught me at A-Level and was an excellent teacher. He really nurtured me and coached me to bring out my full potential."

All of Ashling's family attended Cardinal Wiseman, including her brother and her two sisters, and she has a lot of fond memories from her time at the school. She said: "I have lots of happy memories. In the first year I joined the choir and

my RE teacher asked us to sing at her wedding which was fantastic.

"I was also actively involved in sports and played netball and tennis for the school. There was always a bit of rivalry with all of the schools, but particularly between the independent schools and we beat them regularly at both netball and tennis."

Ashling added that the school actively encouraged pupils to succeed.

She said: "A lot of my peers in my class went to university and there was active encouragement to do that and seek out the right course for you. For those who didn't want to go to university there was support with looking for vocational courses."

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Career

After completing her A-levels, Ashling made a decision not to go to university straight away and took a year out to do a vocational course. She gained a place on a management scheme with Sainsbury’s which whetted her appetite for the corporate environment.

She then went on to work in motor finance as a sales rep and said that the communication skills she developed at Cardinal Wiseman enabled her to speak to people on all levels.

She said: “What Wiseman helped develop in me is the ability to communicate on all levels, which has helped me to succeed in the business world.”

From this she moved into the pharmaceutical sector and spent nine years at the GSK. Here she moved through a variety of roles, starting in sales and then becoming a payer where she made decisions on which drugs should be funded.

Ashling was then headhunted by AstraZeneca, based in Cambridge,

where she has been for eight years. Again she has moved through a variety of roles, including managing the global team which looked at setting the global strategy for products.

Ashling said: “Most recently I have joined the Healthy Heart Africa programme which has been running since 2014. In November 2016 they set it up as a standalone business with me leading the team.

“We’ve got a programme running with five partners in Kenya and have just expanded into Ethiopia. The next steps are looking at which African countries we go to next.”

Ashling lives in Cambridge where AstraZeneca’s new UK office is being built, but travels to Africa every other week. She said that working on Healthy Heart Africa is one of her career highlights.

She said: “There’s nothing better than knowing that you’re making a difference. One of my career goals is to guarantee sustainability of the programme. I want it to be a lift and shift model so when we decide to go to

another market it can be repeated and other organisations can copy it. Only then will it be sustainable.”

Advice to current pupils

Ashling said: “The best advice that I can give to anyone is don’t be afraid to push yourself outside your comfort zone and if you think you don’t have the right qualification or you don’t know the right people, don’t let that hold you back. Be prepared to try different things and know that sometimes the first path that you take isn’t always the one you end up on, and that’s okay.”

She added: “One of the other things I think that’s important is to find a mentor. If there’s a teacher or a careers advisor at the school that you could use as a mentor or even someone in the sixth form if you’re lower down the school, they will provide real honest and valuable advice and it will pay dividends in the long run.”



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