

Q&A: An Interview with Jodie Gillon, President & CEO, BioCT

Jodie Gillon officially started her role as President & CEO last Monday, May 8th.

Jodie brings over 25 years of experience in pharmaceuticals and biotech, having started her career in advocacy and government. She possesses an exceptional background having built out Patient, Medical, and Corporate Affairs at several organizations and experience across all therapeutic areas. Please click [here](#) to read her full bio.

To give the bioscience community the opportunity to get to know Jodie more personally and provide insight into how she intends to lead BioCT, she agreed to sit down and answer our questions – unfiltered!

Looking back at your career thus far, what would you consider the biggest highlight(s)?

There were some pinnacle moments, wherein I was able to advance and I am still in touch with the managers who enabled these leaps. The first was in 2002 at Novartis, I was given the chance to lead Communications on a trial basis when I was just starting out. The role that truly catapulted my career was Heading AstraZeneca's Chief Medical Office – I took on 9 departments and various workstreams in which I previously had no experience. The hardest level advancement for me was making it to VP at Abeona Therapeutics – for whatever reason SVP and C-suite roles seemed to come more easily after that. I was often the only woman on leadership teams and while I was proud, it also motivated me to do my part to change that. The most memorable highlights were impacting patients and caregivers, seeing updates from families whose children exceeded their life-expectancy due to life changing miracles.

Why did you choose Connecticut? BioCT?

I fell in love with Connecticut in 2016, while working at Achillion in New Haven and living at the Omni Hotel for 2 years. New Haven has everything I like about NYC – the museums, theatre, amazing restaurants, walkability, but a different pace and vibe that I prefer. COVID enabled me to make the state my permanent home in 2020. Yet while I was enjoying life here, I was working for a Pittsburgh based start-up and struggling to find a comparable role in CT. When I encounter a challenge, I like to be part of the solution and hope it will benefit a much broader cohort. There was huge appeal in a meaty role that enables me to support building out the ecosystem here. I am drawn to kitchen sink roles wherein I can use every tool in my shed. What cinched the deal was my time with our phenomenal Board, the amazing team I get to lead and I must call out David Scheer's countless hours on the phone with me!

What motivates you to work?

Making an impact on people's lives, especially those most in need. As an Epidemiologist I will do a root cause analysis of a problem or challenge. Then I try to build an ecosystem to support solutions

– this has ranged from changing laws, enabling a diagnosis, access, triage systems, new technology, education, mentoring and matching talent. I am motivated by people and feel immense satisfaction when I enable positive change.

Is there an achievement or past success you feel particularly proud of?

This is a timely question as I have a high school senior who wrote a college essay on 'who inspires you most' and he selected me. Now, he would not allow me to read his essay, however, he did share he included how I went before both Israeli Parliament and US Congress and changed laws in both countries and how those changes impacted millions of patients. After I accepted the BioCT role he said "I can't believe my mom is a CEO." So the achievement I am most proud of is that my career warranted my son feeling proud enough to choose me for his essay and, in a way, it validated the difficult choices across my career as I attempted to balance work and motherhood.

What thoughts and impressions do you have from your first week?

My first week has further confirmed one of the many reasons I love Connecticut – we may not be populous, but we have the very best people. I have received an outpouring of welcome messages and meeting requests to partner. Everyone has been so incredibly supportive, connecting me to new stakeholders, taking the time, sharing insights and information. I have lived in not only other states but other countries and I have never encountered such a tightknit community committed not only to their organizations but the state's well-being overall.

What are some goals you have moving forward?

I am in the midst of a listening tour of current and potential stakeholders. Through these meetings, the wheels are turning and I am constantly evaluating where BioCT can have the greatest ROI and impact. There are several incredible organizations supporting our industry and I want to ensure we are efficient, aligned, and maximizing our potential for collaboration. I also hope that I can motivate all current and potential members to actively participate, as it takes a village and every individual and organization here counts exponentially. Given my personal experience, I want to help ensure that every company can fill and grow their headcount and that everyone who wants to stay and work here can find their pinnacle role.

We'd love to get to know Jodie the person, not just the Jodie CEO. What is one unexpected fact about you?

I'm going to cheat and share two. I enjoy comedy and while I take work incredibly seriously, I like to laugh and have fun. So I may crack a joke when you hear me give a talk. The second fact always surprises people when they meet me in person, but I am tiny. I have a big personality, tall zoom energy, and am quite brazen and now that initial meetings are typically videocalls, I can preempt the level of surprise when you meet me in person.

What's a typical weekend look like for you?

Well none are typical but I try to carve out blocks to catch up on work a bit, see my son if he has time, and go out with friends. I feel incredibly fortunate I have made so many close friendships in Connecticut at this age and stage of life. I love comedy shows and live music so an ideal weekend for me comprises seeing a band on a local beach. My motto is good food, great wine, even better company.

Are there any immediate changes to expect?

First will be around communications. This is a low hanging fruit for me having led communications for almost 3 decades. I am a believer in less is more. We will be moving to weekly roundups, wherein you can click to read on a particular topic. More to follow but I don't believe in change for the sake of change – it has to be thoughtful, logical, and impactful.

Last, but not least, BioCT members are excited to meet you! What is the best way to get to know you better?

Please reach out! It keeps me up at night that I might be missing folks I need to engage. Email: Jgillon@bioct.org and [LinkedIn](#) are ideal. I will also share meetings I plan to attend in person so next up are: 1) The Bioscience Collaborative; 2) Yale Innovation Summit; and 3) BIO in Boston.

Thank you so much for taking the time to answer these questions, Jodie! Everyone at BioCT is excited for you to join the team and we look forward to what comes next.

Don't miss your chance to hear Jodie speak at the Yale Innovation Summit, Thursday, June 1 at 8:30 am, *BioCT: Time for Discovery*. You can see the full agenda and register [here](#).