

JOANNA ([00:06](#)):

Hello everyone and thank you for listening to our podcast series. Today we have a special guest in honor of Pride Month. We are joined by Dr. Eliav Barr, who's head of Global Medical Affairs and who has been with the company for more than 25 years. Eliav, you went to medical school in the 1980s. Can you share how that experience shaped you?

ELIAV ([00:34](#)):

I was a medical student in 1982 to 1986, and that period of time was really the dark period of HIV AIDS. People were just, were dying and they were dying really horrible deaths. It was terrible to see the suffering. It was terrible to see the young, the youth here, young people of all stripes coming into the hospital with terrible infections, knowing that they're going to die. And it was also really terrible to watch the health care system really have tremendous difficulties in providing them with what they deserved, which is care and comfort during what is essentially the end stage of their disease.

JOANNA ([01:16](#)):

Fast forward to today. Do you still see a need for advocacy within the LGBTQ+ community?

ELIAV ([01:24](#)):

You know, things are really so very much better and I'm so very grateful for that, but there's very differing levels of acceptance. It certainly isn't given to all parts of the rainbow, including our transgender brothers and sisters. So I think that there's a lot more work that needs to be done to ensure that our whole community is accepted, respected, that people are made to feel that they will be treated as any other employee or any other citizen.

JOANNA ([01:57](#)):

How do you contribute to creating a culture of inclusivity at our company?

ELIAV ([02:02](#)):

I sponsor the LGBT EBRG or the Merck Rainbow Alliance. During the period of time that I've been the sponsor, one of the most exciting things has been the inauguration of chapters in many countries around the world. You know, it's really important to give back to the community. I'm very privileged to work in a

company like Merck that has tremendous, tremendous respect for LGBT people. And so my life has been very enriched by that. And I want to be able to make sure that others have that privilege.

JOANNA ([02:38](#)):

As a senior leader, do you feel any special responsibility to make LGBTQ+ individuals and issues more visible in the workplace?

ELIAV ([02:47](#)):

It's really important to demonstrate to people in deed, not just in word, that this is an inclusive environment. Our company is particularly good at this. I have never been closeted, not from the very first day. And that's been a terrific experience. I recognize that's not true for everybody. And so it's really important for me to be able to present myself as I am. I try very hard to ensure that... To demonstrate that from a senior leader point of view. So that message goes down to all levels of the organization and I hope that it that it has done so.

JOANNA ([03:28](#)):

Now we're in a new environment, a new world with the COVID outbreak. Do you see the need for community greater in this environment?

ELIAV ([03:40](#)):

What SARS-CoV-2 tells us is that we're all equally vulnerable. And we all have an equal opportunity to contribute. To solve this colossal problem of this virus will require the involvement of many segments of our community. Whether it's people of color or families or single people or frontline workers or office workers, we all have to do, we're all gonna have to be working together. We're all equal or equally vulnerable as human beings. I think it's going to be very important for our community to show that, you know, we are part of the solution and that we understand how important it is to fight this virus and to work together with the rainbow of constituencies around the country and within the company to ensure that we can do our part to solve this problem.

JOANNA ([04:47](#)):

What does Pride Month mean to you?

ELIAV ([04:50](#)):

Throughout those difficult years, in the eighties and nineties, when life was really hard and people were dying, those pride months and pride parades and events meant a lot because they gave an opportunity to say, we're here. We're a strong community. We're a good community. We care for each other. We're visible. We are politically important. All of these were really important formative events for me. We have to leverage our strengths and the righteousness of our cause that all we want is a fair shake and nothing more.

JOANNA ([05:29](#)):

Eliav thank you so much for your time and for helping us celebrate pride month here at our company.

ELIAV ([05:34](#)):

Thank you so much.