Q&A · Pharma Focus America

Learning Faster

Than the Problem

Building High-Performance Technical Teams Across Pharma's Operating Realities

Kishore Hotha, PhD, MBA

Pharma Focus America | May 2026

>

What Travels Across Sectors

Innovator Biotech builds knowledge about a single molecule that may define the company's future.

CDMOs run a portfolio of programs at different phases for different clients.

Contract testing labs run hundreds of methods across dozens of clients in a single month.

The economics, cadences, and failure modes are genuinely different.

THE THESIS

The principles do not change. The implementation does. Three operating realities. The same five principles separate the teams that consistently outperform.

The CDMO Trap

Context-switching, not workload, is the silent killer.

A CDMO scientist runs four to eight programs simultaneously — different phases, different clients, different regulatory expectations. The cost is not volume. It is the cognitive tax on every switch.

WHAT TO DO

Protect your best people from fragmentation — not by shielding them from work, but by designing the system so the work arrives in coherent blocks.

The Innovator Biotech Trap

It is fragility.

In Innovator Biotech, the team often is the knowledge base. There is no precedent to fall back on for a genuinely novel modality. The analytical and CMC teams write the playbook as they go.

THE RISK

When knowledge lives in one or two brilliant scientists, the company is one departure away from a six-month delay. The fix: distribute expertise. Force decisions onto paper at the moment they are made.

The Contract Lab Trap

It is not error.

It is drift.

When a lab runs the same assay a thousand times, the quality of the thousandth run is not automatic. Small deviations creep in. Analysts rely on pattern recognition instead of the method. Review becomes a rubber stamp.

WHAT TO DO

Active attention. Rotations. Cross-training. Root-cause exercises, even on clean data. Technical reviews that actually review.

On Learning Velocity

How a team runs its technical reviews tells you everything.

✕ LOW-LEARNING TEAM

Talks about what has been done. Retrospective. The meeting is a status update.

✓ HIGH-LEARNING TEAM

Talks about what is not yet understood. Prospective. The meeting is where uncertainty gets compressed.

Over a year, the two teams accumulate radically different amounts of insight.

>

On Data Integrity

THE REFRAME

Most data integrity failures are not moral failures. They are system failures dressed up as moral ones.

When an analyst fabricates a data point, the investigation almost always reveals the same things underneath:

Unrealistic timelines. Unreliable instrumentation. A supervisor who punished bad news harder than bad data.

THE FIX

Not more SOPs. Make it unnecessary to cut corners.

Five Principles That Travel

1. **Learning velocity**
   matters more than talent density
2. **Make problems cheap to surface**
   the earlier they arrive, the less they cost
3. **Stay close to the data**
   not just close to the people
4. **Feedback is information**
   not judgment
5. **People development is a three-year bet**
   not a quarterly line item

Bottom Line

If you've been building technical teams across pharma, much of this will feel familiar.

What's new is putting it in one place — and the language to talk about it.

THE THESIS
The principles do not change. The implementation does. Three operating realities. Five principles. One conversation worth having with your team.

Read the Full Q&A in Pharma Focus America

Kishore Hotha, PhD, MBA
Dr. Hotha's Life Sciences LLC · www.drhothas.com