

Lily Rin-Laures

She Brings Medical Pedigree for Biotech, Pharma IP Clients

by John Flynn Rooney

Li-Hsien Rin-Laures M.D. blazed a trail at a young age.

Dr. Rin-Laures is a partner at **Marshall, Gerstein & Borun LLP**, an 80-lawyer Chicago intellectual property firm. She also serves on the firm's executive committee.

Before attending law school, Rin-Laures graduated from college at age 17 and from medical school at 21.

While she does not practice medicine, her medical degree is useful.

"My medical degree helps me every day," Rin-Laures says. "It helps me talk to the scientists and business people and to understand their ultimate business goals."

Her practice focuses on patents related to biotech and pharmaceutical products, including eight approved drugs. She was a member of the team prosecuting U.S. Patent 8,063,182 related to ENBREL.



She listens carefully to clients. "I learn all about what they're doing and what they're planning to do," she says. "I then try to integrate their research and development results and future plans with patent strategy."

Marshall, Gerstein & Borun's practice groups include IP litigation, patent prosecution, trademark and copyright, along with IP transactions and licensing.

The firm's clients include Amgen Inc., BioMarin Pharmaceutical Inc., Baxter, Eli Lilly and Co., The Procter & Gamble Co., Google and Groupon.

The licensee of a new technology, CRISPR Therapeutics, retained Dr. Rin-Laures to advise the company on IP strategy.

"Every time a client comes in, I get to learn about a new technology and think about future uses and applications of the technology," Rin-Laures says.

Currently, she is learning about CRISPR-Cas9, a technology used for gene editing that did not exist two years ago.

"It's breakthrough technology," she says. "It has generated lots of excitement and holds a lot of hope."

It can cost \$200 million to develop a

new drug nowadays.

"No one will invest \$200 million in a drug," Rin-Laures says, "unless they think they can make money from that drug for some period of time."

Dr. Luisa Bigornia is vice president of intellectual property at BioMarin Pharmaceutical in San Rafael, Calif., and has known Rin-Laures since 2002. That company develops therapeutics for treatment of human patients.

Rin-Laures has worked as BioMarin's outside counsel since 2003. She and her team at the firm have overseen the prosecution and maintenance of many of that company's patent portfolios.

That work involves the filing of patent applications covering products as well as being involved in third-party challenges to patents. Rin-Laures also handles IP work relating to the company's filing of documents with the Securities and Exchange Commission.

Among the drugs Rin-Laures and her team helped BioMarin obtain patents for are VIMZIM, which is used to treat a

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rare genetic disorder, and Kuvan, which is used to treat patients with phenylketonuria (PKU). That rare condition occurs when infants can't properly break down an amino acid known as phenylalanine.

"It's important to have someone who understands not only the basic science, but also the use and application of basic science in developing therapeutics for treatment of human patients," Bigornia says.

Rin-Laures has a well-rounded combination of IP knowledge and work experience, Bigornia says.

"She has deep, analytical and real strong communication skills, both verbal and written," says Bigornia.

Rin-Laures also stays in contact with her clients even when she's on vacation overseas. Bigornia recalls speaking with Rin-Laures when she was in France.

"She's just really attentive and committed to her clients," Bigornia says. "I think that's what makes her outstanding."

In September, Rin-Laures was inducted into the LMG Life Sciences Hall of Fame, which recognizes professionals who have demonstrated outstanding credentials in the life sciences industry.

Life on a Fast Track

Born in Carbondale and raised in Maryland, Rin-Laures is the only child of parents who are Chinese immigrants. Her father is a retired engineer; her mother is a physician.

Because of her academic achievements, Rin-Laures, who is known as Lily, skipped three grades in grammar school and started high school at age 11.

She left high school after two years and attended John Hopkins. She graduated in 1984 at age 17.

Rin-Laures initially developed an interest in medicine because her mother, aunt and both grandfathers worked as doctors. She received her medical degree from Northwestern Medical School in 1988 at age 21.

"I don't remember it being difficult," Rin-Laures says of being younger than many other medical students in her class. "There were other younger medical students at Northwestern."

When it came time for a residency program at a hospital, Rin-Laures decided not to pursue that path. "I did not like the sight of blood and bodily fluids," she says.

So, she pursued a job as a secretary at Marshall, Gerstein & Borun. Firm officials, however, decided to hire her as a patent agent because of her medical degree.

About 18 months later, she enrolled at Harvard Law School and graduated *cum*

laude in 1992. She then worked for a year as a law clerk for Judge Jay S. Plager on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit.

Helping Women and the Firm Thrive

In 1993, Rin-Laures returned to Marshall, Gerstein & Borun and made partner in 1999. As a member of Marshall, Gerstein & Borun's Executive Committee, Rin-Laures helps set policy. She is the committee's first female member.

When Rin-Laures joined the firm, she was its 37th lawyer. The following year, 8 percent of Marshall, Gerstein & Borun's partners were women. The percentage of women equity partners is now 24 percent and will rise to 29 percent when the firm's newly elected partners join in early 2015.

The firm maintains a culture that allows women to thrive, Rin-Laures says.

"I listen to what my partners have to say, just as I listen to what my clients have to say," she explains.

Jeffrey S. Sharp is the firm's managing partner. He relies on Rin-Laures to help lead projects and provide input in matters related to the firm. One of the firm's recently completed projects was an electronic records management and intake initiative. Rin-Laures provided input on that project, which should lead to improved work flow and efficiency. Now, Marshall, Gerstein & Borun has greatly reduced its reliance on physical files, and attorneys can gain access to and manage their client files anytime.

"It's better client service because we have constant access to our files," she says.

Rin-Laures enjoys solving problems for colleagues and clients.

"In the firm, it might be finding a more efficient way to do things," she says. "For a client, it might be providing them advice using our legal expertise and experience."

One challenging part of her job involves making sure that her lawyer colleagues and other firm employees understand their roles in a project, meet deadlines, and receive training and responsibility that helps them grow.

Marshall, Gerstein & Borun uses 360-degree reviews in which associates review partners anonymously. Dr. Rin-Laures is one of the top-rated partners in those reviews and is heavily involved in training the firm's associates.

Rin-Laures believes strongly in mentoring and assisting younger lawyers at the firm. She also provides young associates with responsibility early on.

Heather R. Kissling joined Marshall, Gerstein & Borun in 2007 after interviewing with Rin-Laures. Kissling was excited at the opportunity to represent a diverse pool of

clients on extremely important products.

Kissling says Rin-Laures brought her along to client meetings several times when Kissling was a young associate.

Rin-Laures "is very good at taking young associates to client meetings so they can learn by watching," Kissling says. Those lessons include "how to approach a problem face-to-face with a client and how to provide really great client service."

One of Rin-Laures' strengths is that she sees the big picture, Kissling says.

"When clients come to her with a particular issue, she's already looking three steps ahead and can counsel a client not only about the particular issue they came with, but also with what's coming next," Kissling says.

Kissling says Rin-Laures is approachable. "She is extremely smart, passionate, has unparalleled experience in our field and is fun to work with," Kissling says. "It's a rare combination that makes her a great mentor to associates within the firm."

"And her clients consider her a partner and adviser, not just 'outside counsel.'"

The firm's lawyers cover all aspects of IP and communicate with each other to provide cohesive counsel to the clients. For example, prosecution partners obtain patents covering products; trademark partners will protect products and brand names worldwide; transaction partners will license the IP; and litigation partners can defend and enforce it.

Rin-Laures spends about one-third of her time on management issues and two-thirds working on client matters.

Communications with clients are important, says Rin-Laures. "We need to communicate our advice clearly and concisely and with all of the options."

Benefit of an In-house View

Earlier in her career, Rin-Laures decided to experience patent law from the viewpoint of an in-house general counsel. She took a two-year leave of absence from the firm ending in 2002, working in California as senior vice president and general counsel of Hyseq Pharmaceuticals Inc.

"It gave me insight into the pressures that in-house counsel face and the type of questions they are asked to answer," she says. "I think I can do a better job because I can understand the ultimate questions they want answered."

"Going in-house early in my career really opened my eyes to the big picture," she adds. That big picture includes the reality of how constantly patent and technology law change.

"I think the technology is changing

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ahead of the law,” she says.

The U.S. Supreme Court used to issue a patent-related decision once every couple of years. Now, on average, the high court issues two to three patent-related decisions annually.

For example, in 2013 the Supreme Court issued its opinion in *Association for Molecular Pathology v. Myriad Genetics*, 569 U.S. 2013. In that decision, the high court held that simple isolation of a gene found in nature does not qualify as a patentable subject matter.

“There has been a huge change in patent law since the *Myriad* case,” Rin-Laures says. “I think the unsettling aftermath to the *Myriad* case was the (U.S. Patent and Trademark Office) issued new guidelines on the patent eligibility of genes, proteins and natural products in March.”

Many critics felt that the patent office had extended the *Myriad* case beyond the narrow holding that the Supreme Court intended, she says.

In 2012, the justices issued their decision in *Mayo Collaborative Services v. Prometheus Laboratories Inc.*, 132 S. Ct. 1289. Together *Myriad* and *Prometheus* dealt a blow to the biotechnology and pharmaceutical industries by making it more difficult to patent tests for personalized medical treatments, Rin-Laures says.

In her personal life, Rin-Laures is a married mother of two daughters and a son who range in age from 11 to 17. She serves as a Girl Scout troop leader.

She also enjoys participating in a gourmet dinner club with her husband, David Laures, and friends. Examples of menu items include steak with peppercorn sauce and tofu marinated in ginger as an appetizer.

In the IP profession currently, there are more female attorneys working on life sciences matters than in engineering-related fields. Life sciences include biotechnology, pharmaceuticals, diagnostics, medical devices and agricultural biotechnology.

Dr. Rin-Laures was a founder and the first chair of the Chicago chapter of Women in Bio, a professional organization for women involved in the life sciences industry.

She learned of the Women in Bio group at the 2010 Bio International Convention, hosted by the Biotechnology Industry Organization in Chicago that year.

“It’s very important to me to help women advance in their (biotechnology) careers,” she says. “It has been a great avenue to meet other women in the field, to encourage them and get encouragement from them. That’s very important to advancing one’s career.” ■