Patrick Doyle – Head, Viatris Latin America



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Head of Viatris Latin America, Patrick Doyle, spoke to PharmaBoardroom about setting up the two-year old company's Latam affiliate during the pandemic, the decision to focus on specific therapeutic areas—cardiovascular disease, central nervous system (CNS) disorders, and pain—in LatAm and Viatris' aim to partner with local stakeholders and go beyond providing medicines to address deeper patient journey issues in the region.

Viatris formed two years ago and you joined after over 20 years at Pfizer to lead its Latin American affiliate. Can you provide an overview the company's journey in the region so far?

Viatris is the result of the combination of Pfizer's Upjohn unit, which I was part of, and Mylan. It brings together best-in-class scientific, manufacturing and distribution expertise with proven regulatory, medical, and commercial capabilities to deliver quality medicines to patients when and where they need them most. For me, a brand is built on a clear purpose, in a distinct environment and with a group of people with a certain set of capabilities that can work together towards that purpose. After 25 years at Pfizer, I chose to be part of Viatris because of its purpose, which is to empower people worldwide to live healthier at every stage of life.

Viatris' goal is to use its understanding, experiences and capabilities in sales, marketing, and commercial general management leadership to be able to build something from the ground up. Latin America is a region filled with unmet medical needs; hence we could not miss the opportunity to make an impact here.

The company will be turning two years in November 2022 and, needless to say, a global pandemic at the onset of its endeavours made things more complicated, but not impossible. At the very beginning, we focused on establishing who we are in Latin America, building the organization up and defining our portfolio of products and offerings. Our second move was to set up our presence and define our go-to-market models in order to be successful, because in Latin America if you do not succeed in Brazil and Mexico…you simply have not made it. At that stage, we had to also ensure the right leaders were in place, and all of that while the pandemic was taking place. But we adapted and evolved while always listening to the needs of our stakeholders. We had to focus on where our help was most needed and that was in the area of non-communicable diseases (NCDs) such as cardiovascular disease —still the number one killer—, and mental health disorders or central nervous system disorders like depression and anxiety, but also pain-related conditions like osteoarthritis or neuropathies. We have continued to listen to all stakeholders, always considering patients, and are still on a journey to define our future.

Setting up the Latam affiliate when the company was just created from the merger must have involved a lot of difficult decisions about talent. What were your criteria for choosing a team?

Being born from the combination of two great organizations, Viatris has a solid portfolio of products, but what has always been more important are the people. I started with a huge pool of experts, a very diverse group with many talents from both organizations. With such amazing candidates, it was essential to choose those with a passion for the project and values that go hand in hand with those of Viatris. If you were going to work for Viatris, you had to be someone courageous in conversations and someone that takes initiative, not just wanting a roadmap with all the solutions provided. People who are willing to adapt —like with the pandemic— and who are committed to Viatris' purpose are becoming the solid foundation of the organisation.

How does Latin America fit into Viatris' global strategy?

Latin America is a critical region and part of the emerging markets that can contribute to business growth, but also offer talent and diversity. In the diversity of markets, businesses, opportunities and challenges across Latin America, I see an enormous pool of capable people who can be guided and developed into being the best and most effective leaders that can contribute to achieving our goals. As a leader, I have the responsibility to understand other leaders' and colleagues' aspirations and commit to helping them achieve them. By doing this, I have been successful in my career, because success is a by-product of people having a genuine connection to their job and feeling committed to getting the best results possible. Over the past two years, what we have tried to do within Latin America is to embrace the global culture, and set the bar high in order to shape the rest of the organisation and drive a very engaged group of people to deliver top performance and culture.

Differently from other Latam colleagues, you are based in the US and manage your team virtually. How vital is trust?

Something I learned early on is that trust is key when working with extended groups of people, but trust is not something that should be earned, it is something that should be extended because we are all working together towards the same goal. This trust will grow or decline depending on the interactions we have with each other, in other words, I trust, I empower, but I also hold people accountable. I am very fortunate because I have been working with exceptional leaders and teams that have helped me break into the market in Latin America, mostly virtually. I trust my teams on site because through their commitment they make our success possible.

You mentioned the focus on specific therapeutic areas (cardiovascular disease, CNS and pain) in Latin America despite Viatris having a larger focused portfolio of therapeutic areas. What led to that choice?

I am of the mindset that rather than doing many things mediocrely, it is best to do just a few things exceptionally well. With respect to therapeutic areas in Latin America, I immediately think of three things: unmet needs exacerbated by COVID-19, fantastic capabilities and a diverse portfolio of therapeutic options to support physicians and patients in the region. This applies to cardiovascular disease, central nervous system disorders, and pain – our core areas.

We have not only been doing the external work, but building ourselves up internally. On top of that, we have to stay alert for any other opportunities in emerging therapeutic areas that might be pertinent in the region or related to a specific country like Brazil, Mexico or Costa Rica. Because of that, we are constantly evaluating what our next move should be internally or who we should partner with externally.

With a large part of Viatris' portfolio dedicated to generics, how important would you say affordability is in Latin America for payer and for patients?

It is critical. In Latin America, as we do globally, Viatris, follows our global three paths: access, leadership, and partnership. We cannot talk about access without affordability; hence the diversity of our portfolio offers us many solutions, unlike some of our competitors who are solely generics manufacturers. Within our portfolio, we manufacture and commercialise iconic brands for instance Zoloft or Lipitor. We cannot deliver on our purpose without tackling access and affordability first, in conjunction with leadership and partnership.

What differentiates Viatris is our mission to empower people worldwide to live healthier at every stage of life. We provide a portfolio of 1,400 approved molecules with a broad focus on access. Therefore, we think about those issues that might affect accessibility and find solutions. We align with our purpose and lead our partners around all challenges in order to be successful, thus we remain open to discussions and flexible enough to have important conversations with governments and private stakeholders.

Most companies prioritise primary care in Latin America over specialty care areas of their portfolio. With the region's political, economic and social realities in mind, which medicines and solutions do you think these countries are most in need of?

If I had to isolate just a few products I would have to agree primary care is at the top. At Viatris in Latin America, primary care is important because we have a global health crisis where cardiovascular disease is still the number one killer, despite decades of innovation. Pills are not solving the issue; the medicine exists but the crisis remains. Since our focus is to offer real solutions and not just medicine to help patients live healthier and longer, we do not base all of our efforts on affordability alone. We sit with stakeholders, physician groups and governments to go deeper – to listen to the problems and offer our capabilities as part of the solution.

Viatris is willing to assess shortcomings in the patient journey and help physicians to better motivate and guide them to health. A lot of what we are doing is bringing awareness of these conditions in order to prevent diseases or treat them early on. For example, we launched a campaign in Brazil about mental health awareness and it has received fantastic reviews. This is what patients in Latin America need: organizations that offer solutions before and after a prescription.

Latin America is known for its volatility, particularly in the political and economic sphere. How does Viatris deal with instability in the region?

Beyond the current economic reality or government, we must maintain our focus on improving the healthcare landscape in our region. Together we can take turns leading strategies because we all have the same end goal. We have to trust this to be the truth and if one of the partners does not trust the other, most likely it comes from past experiences. As a new player in the region, we can come in and listen, try to conciliate and build bridges so that we all can work together.

Viatris is present in a number of countries in the region already. Will the company open more subsidiaries going forward?

Our medicines are available throughout Latin America, we have a full presence in Brazil, Mexico, and the Central American and Caribbean clusters, and support the rest of the countries through distributors and external partners. We are still adapting, as Viatris' journey in Latin America is relatively new, and we will continue to work to provide more access to medicines across Latin America.

What are your expectations for 2023?

We are having a successful 2022, success being measured by more patients gaining access to our portfolio and therapeutic offerings in the NCD space. I hope to keep this momentum going in 2023. Internally we hope to further develop our colleagues and ensure they are equipped to be at their best every day. Forbes has recognized us as one of the best companies to work for two years in a row and we hope to keep it that way.

Do you have a final message you would like to share with our international audience?

We have great opportunities in Latin America but also a great responsibility, as there are many patients suffering from NCDs and their needs have not been met for quite some time. Viatris stands as an organization that is not only focused on providing high-quality, trusted medicines but helping patients achieve therapeutic success.

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