

Lawrence Wong - General Manager, Ferring Pharmaceuticals Hong Kong



It is a strategic imperative that Hong Kong develops its unique system for drug registration as this will, in turn, foster a more comprehensive ecosystem, and attract more clinical research to take place here

21.08.2023

Tags: [Hong Kong](#), [Ferring](#), [Women's Health](#), [Strategy](#), [Access](#), [China](#)

Lawrence Wong outlines how reproductive medicine-focused Ferring Pharmaceuticals is serving the patients of Hong Kong as the city's birth rates have plateaued, weighs in on why the establishment of a Hong Kong medicines regulator is a strategic imperative, and discusses how his firm is collaborating with colleagues in mainland China around various Greater Bay Area initiatives.

Last time we spoke to you, pre-COVID, you were focused on building the Ferring Hong Team, have things evolved since then?

Our cornerstone has always been people and it is our philosophy that people come first at Ferring. We are always looking to develop the team internally, attract talents, and empower everyone capable of and ready for the ever-changing dynamics of the pharmaceutical world.

It is also noted to point out that previously many pharmaceutical companies mainly focused on commercial operations in Hong Kong due to the limited market size. Nevertheless, we have seen changes in recent years that engagement with different key stakeholders is now more important than ever for strategically leveraging the position of Hong Kong. We are not only supplying medicines, but also driving scientific collaborations with academia and medical experts working together for building an evermore favourable eco-system. The industry has been making significant investments and commitments.

Hong Kong has top notch scientific and medical experts leading in different areas on the international stage. While pharmaceutical companies supply innovative and efficacious medicines for patients, medical research and new scientific findings have been contributing to advancing treatments and therapies for ever-better outcomes.

Does Hong Kong being bilingual with English and Chinese, help you work more closely with the mainland Chinese market and their KOLs?

Certainly, languages are essential for effective communication and Hong Kong has inherited the advantage of being a bilingual city with a highly diverse culture. Specifically to our industry, the healthcare systems are in line with international standards and our population is predominantly of Chinese ethnicity, which creates a unique edge in terms of health and medical data and associated research.

What is the impact of Hong Kong not having its own independent regulator, like the EMA and FDA, for drug registrations and approvals?

It is a strategic imperative that Hong Kong develops its unique system for drug registration as this will, in turn, foster a more comprehensive ecosystem, and attract more clinical research to take place here. Provided the registration and research data can be leveraged for access in Greater Bay Area and even China, it would elevate Hong Kong's position based on assessments by headquarters of multinational pharma firms.

From a general perspective, we are delighted to see the progress and advancement of the regulatory process and system in Hong Kong. We can foresee that more medicines can be registered and available to patients at a faster pace while the qualities are well ensured. More clinical trials could be conducted and eventually leading to greater benefits for more patients in the long run. Recently, works have been in progress with various stakeholders to explore the way we can facilitate and expedite the regulatory processes in Hong Kong.

Ferring just had a big milestone with an FDA approval for its bladder cancer drug. Presumably, one day this will be brought to Hong Kong. Is innovation being rewarded here through quick market access?

We are very grateful that Ferring has received approval from US FDA for this product for High-Risk, BCG-Unresponsive Non-Muscle Invasive Bladder Cancer.

As a local entity, we desire to have the product launched and accessible in Hong Kong. While our corporate headquarters wants to expedite launches from a global perspective, the current mechanism for drug registration in Hong Kong requires two certificates of pharmaceutical product (CPPs) from the recognized countries for submission. We look forward to seeing how market access can be rendered more effective in Hong Kong.

What is the strategy of Ferring within the Hong Kong market and how is your medicines portfolio being deployed?

Reproductive Medicine is our signature business. We are continuously committed to supporting patients in this area, even though it has been noted that the fertility rate is challenged to some extent in Hong Kong. Besides, we continuously work on other therapeutic areas including Maternal Health, as well as Gastroenterology and Urology, where our medicines have been practically helping those patients in need through different sectors and channels.

The population in Hong Kong has plateaued, and birth rates are dropping. As the leader of a leading fertility company in the city, what do you believe is behind this?

Nowadays, people in Hong Kong, and even many areas worldwide may have more considerations and are somehow more conservative about having babies, probably because of financial concerns in a world of increasing costs of living, as well as ambitions around milestone achievements in their career or life journey. From another angle, those reasons may somehow defer the family planning of couples having children, leading to the increased likelihood of demands for fertility treatments.

Which areas are growing in your portfolio?

As mentioned earlier, we work on Reproductive Medicine as our signature business while we continue our intensive work on Maternal Health, Gastroenterology and Urology. While the low fertility rate and decreased birth rate in recent years have been the situations we must face, we are committed to supporting the increasing number of patients in need in gastroenterology and urology, by working with medical professionals and patient advocacy groups for better

management of their medical conditions.

You have worked in the past in the Greater Bay Area (GBA) and there is a policy to make Hong Kong a gateway for therapies in the region. Are you doing this at Ferring?

We work and coordinate with our colleagues in China to explore any leverage and support for various Greater Bay Area (GBA) initiatives in healthcare and R&D areas. The recent updates on policy that enable Hong Kong-registered medicines to be accessible in some medical institutions could be positive news for many patients with unmet medical needs in GBA. On the other hand, our focus on Hong Kong would always be primary and fundamental as we understand that such works are needed for ever-better treatments for the patients here.

Are you optimistic about the future of Hong Kong?

Hong Kong is a fast-moving environment. With the changes currently occurring, the city's potential can be unleashed and new opportunities can emerge. Having been in Hong Kong for years, our priority remains, as always, to explore ever-better ways to support patients. Moreover, we are eager to look beyond and explore how to advance the scientific frontiers and our therapeutics through scientific research and collaborations with academia.

[See more interviews](#)