

Yoshio Uchida - President, Daiichi Sankyo China



Our central mission is to enrich global quality of life through a patient-centric approach in our products and services

05.09.2024

Tags: [China](#), [Daiichi Sankyo](#), [Oncology](#), [Strategy](#), [ADCs](#),

Yoshio Uchida, President of Daiichi Sankyo China, outlines the company's strategic focus on Antibody-Drug Conjugates (ADCs) within China's oncology market and China's relevant role in the company's global R&D operations. He explains how Daiichi Sankyo is addressing the challenges of a dynamic healthcare environment while emphasizing the company's commitment to patient care and innovation.

What insights can you share about your distinctive career journey, from Japan to India, and now China, and how these experiences inform your leadership as President of Daiichi Sankyo China in such a fast-paced and dynamic environment?

My career journey from Japan to India, and now to China, has been marked by distinct challenges and invaluable experiences. Each country has its own unique cultural nuances and business environments. In Japan, the emphasis on precision and tradition shaped my early professional values. Moving to India exposed me to a vibrant, rapidly evolving market where adaptability became essential. China, however, presented a new level of dynamism, especially in the healthcare sector. Upon my arrival in China, it was my first time working in this market, and I had to quickly adjust to its unique pace and energy. The healthcare sector here is incredibly dynamic, with a strong focus on rapid delivery and innovation. My primary objective has been to ensure that we bring our innovative medicines to patients in China as efficiently as possible, in line with Daiichi Sankyo's global mission to enhance the quality of life.

China holds significant strategic importance for Daiichi Sankyo, a relationship that dates back to the 1990s. Our initial efforts were concentrated on primary care products, and today we are undergoing a transformative shift towards oncology, reflecting our broader global ambitions. Despite this shift, our commitment to primary care, particularly in managing cardiovascular and chronic diseases, and pain management fields remains steadfast. These experiences across different markets have taught me the importance of flexibility and a deep understanding of local dynamics, which are crucial for effective leadership. They have also reinforced our unwavering commitment to providing high-quality healthcare solutions that improve lives, both in China and around the world.

How is Daiichi Sankyo positioning itself in China's competitive oncology market, particularly with your focus on ADCs? What strategies have you employed to educate stakeholders about this innovative technology?

Daiichi Sankyo distinguishes itself in China through our deep commitment to science and technology, particularly in the field of ADCs, which represent a significant advancement in oncology by combining targeted therapy with powerful cytotoxic agents. We have successfully introduced our DXd ADCs in China, starting with HER2-positive breast cancer and expanding to HER2-low breast cancer and gastric cancer, underscoring our dedication to innovation in cancer treatment.

Advocating Chinese Key Opinion Leaders (KOLs) and regulators about ADCs has been essential to our strategy, ensuring stakeholders understand the unique benefits of this technology. This aligns with broader initiatives like Healthy China 2030, where improving cancer survival rates is a key priority.

Our proprietary DXd ADC platform has placed Daiichi Sankyo at the forefront of this evolving field, with products involved in over one hundred clinical studies worldwide, covering various cancer types. Enhertu (T-DXd), our first DXd-ADC product, has made a significant impact in China, now included in multiple clinical guidelines, such as the CSCO Guidelines. This success is part of our broader 2025 Vision to become a global pharma innovator with a competitive advantage in oncology.

Beyond innovative treatments, we are also committed to raising public and patient awareness. For instance, in March 2023, we supported the Beijing Aipu Cancer Patient Care Foundation to launch a breast cancer early screening campaign, aiming to enhance awareness and calling for early detection, aligning with the broader goal of Healthy China 2030.

What role does China play in Daiichi Sankyo's global R&D strategy, and how are your oncology treatments currently positioned within the country's healthcare landscape?

China is a critical component of Daiichi Sankyo's global R&D strategy. Our T-DXd in China are currently positioned as second-line therapies for breast cancer and third-line for gastric cancer. We are actively conducting clinical trials to expand these indications and improve patient outcomes. With approximately 30 of our global clinical trials taking place in China, the country's role in our R&D efforts is both significant and strategic. This integration underscores our commitment to advancing cancer treatment and delivering innovative healthcare solutions that can make a global impact.

China has become a core driver in our global strategy, particularly as we implement our 2025 Vision to establish Daiichi Sankyo as a global pharma innovator in oncology. Our commitment is reflected in the nearly 2 trillion yen in R&D investment allocated between 2021 and 2025, aimed at advancing our pipeline of innovative treatments, including our Six DXd ADCs. Leveraging China's robust research capabilities and favorable policy environment, we are accelerating drug development processes to swiftly introduce cutting-edge treatments to patients in China, contributing to improved outcomes both locally and globally.

How does Daiichi Sankyo address the challenge of balancing affordability and accessibility of oncology medicines giving the unique pricing system?

Navigating the complexities of pricing, particularly in a market like China, requires a delicate balance between affordability, accessibility, and sustainability. Our approach is to carefully evaluate the needs and perspectives of all stakeholders, including the government, the pharmaceutical industry, and most importantly, the patients. It's a constant challenge to find a point of equilibrium that ensures our innovative treatments reach those who need them while also considering the economic realities. Striking this balance is essential for ensuring that our advanced oncology drugs are both accessible to patients and viable within the broader healthcare ecosystem.

To achieve this balance, we focus on making our ADCs accessible by working closely with healthcare authorities. By aligning our strategies with broader initiatives like Healthy China 2030, we aim to improve cancer survival rates while also addressing pricing pressures through innovative

pricing models and partnerships. This approach helps us maintain the sustainability of our operations while expanding access to life-saving treatments across China.

Many leaders highlight the challenges of the Chinese market, particularly the quick pricing pressures and the need for rapid product launches. What specific aspects of launching products in China differ from your experiences in other markets?

China's market, with its population of 1.4 billion, brings unique responsibilities and challenges. At Daiichi Sankyo, we are deeply committed to improving the quality of life in China, guided by our core values of innovation, integrity, and accountability. Innovation drives our efforts to deliver advanced, science-driven, and technology-driven treatments. Integrity is paramount, especially in a market where anti-corruption initiatives are significant. We strive to maintain the highest moral standards and uphold transparency in all our operations. Accountability is equally critical, as we work to be fair and responsible in every aspect of our business. By staying true to these principles, we aim to not only navigate the complexities of the Chinese market but also lay the foundation for sustainable growth and long-term success.

Launching products in China requires us to adapt to the market's rapid pace while navigating complex regulatory environments and pricing pressures. Our ability to introduce new treatments swiftly is supported by China's evolving policy landscape, which encourages the expedited approval of innovative drugs. By aligning with initiatives like Healthy China 2030, we not only ensure timely product launches but also address broader public health goals. Staying true to our core principles allows us to navigate these challenges effectively, laying the foundation for sustainable growth and long-term success in China.

In the context of Daiichi Sankyo's operations in China, how do you ensure that core values like integrity, innovation, and accountability are consistently upheld, especially given the challenges of high employee turnover in a fast-paced market?

Upholding our core values—integrity, innovation, and accountability—is central to Daiichi Sankyo's mission, particularly in a dynamic and rapidly evolving market like China. We achieve this through the "One DS Culture," a global initiative that we have implemented across all our operations, including in China. This culture is built around three foundational behaviors: fostering growth and development, nurturing collaboration and trust, and embracing inclusivity and diversity. These

behaviors are not just theoretical; they are actively practiced and reinforced within our organization. To ensure these values are deeply embedded, we conduct ongoing training and engagement programs, and each year we appoint Culture Ambassadors. These Ambassadors play a crucial role in promoting and integrating these core values into daily operations, ensuring that our commitment to ethical conduct and high moral standards remains at the forefront of everything we do.

In addressing the challenge of high employee turnover, which is particularly pronounced in China, we focus on creating a strong sense of belonging and purpose. We emphasize why working at Daiichi Sankyo is not just a job but a meaningful career choice. We offer continuous opportunities for personal and professional development, which are critical in a competitive market. While compensation is important, we recognize that a supportive and healthy work environment is equally vital for employee retention. This year, we have made it a priority to build a “healthy organization”—one that is effective, efficient, productive, and conducive to long-term success. By fostering a culture that values growth, integrity, and collaboration, we aim to retain our talent and ensure that our employees are fully engaged in our mission to improve the quality of life through innovation.

Daiichi Sankyo’s China continues also to add and launch products in the primary care space, where one can assume competition is high and differentiation low. Why this area is still of a focus for you?

Our decision to introduce primary care products in China is driven by the significant market potential and our established expertise in cardiovascular and chronic diseases, etc. For example, Tarlige, a treatment for diabetic peripheral neuropathic pain (DPNP), recently received regulatory approval in China following its success in Japan. We are preparing for its commercial launch, building on strong relationships with Key Experts (KEs) through products like Loxonin. In addition to Tarlige, our portfolio in China also includes Lixiana, a key product for stroke prevention, which underscores our broader commitment to addressing a wide range of unmet medical needs in the country. These products complement our focus on oncology, particularly with the growing interest in ADCs.

While the ADC field is rapidly evolving, our primary focus remains on advancing our research and development efforts to maintain the highest standards in science and technology. This dual focus on both primary care and oncology allows us to leverage our internal expertise and continue

meeting the diverse healthcare needs of patients in China.

Looking ahead to 2024-2025, what are the key priorities for Daiichi Sankyo in China in the coming years?

Looking forward, Daiichi Sankyo has several crucial priorities, both globally and within China. Our primary focus globally is on advancing our pipeline of ADCs, including promising candidates such as T-DXd, Dato-DXd, HER3-DXd, I-DXd, and R-DXd. These (investigational) products represent significant innovations in cancer treatment, and we are committed to their continued development.

To accelerate the development and commercialization of these oncology products, Daiichi Sankyo has established collaborations with industry leaders like AstraZeneca and US Merck. These partnerships are essential for enhancing the accessibility and affordability of our innovative treatments, further reinforcing our commitment to patients in China.

In China, our strategy revolves around two primary pillars: primary care and oncology. While our oncology product was just launched in China last year, it is progressing rapidly. Our immediate priority is to build a stronger, more robust organization to support this growth. With our team in China now exceeding 1500 people, we are focused on expanding our capabilities, particularly in oncology, to meet the evolving needs of the Chinese market and establish a solid foundation for long-term success.

How does Daiichi Sankyo attract experienced professionals to its oncology division, particularly when competing with established players in the industry?

To attract top talent to our oncology division, Daiichi Sankyo emphasizes its strong commitment to inclusion, diversity, and innovation. We believe that integrating diverse experiences and expertise enhances our organization's effectiveness. Our strategic alliances with industry leaders also play a crucial role in accelerating our reach to patients and enhancing our competitiveness within the pharmaceutical industry.

By fostering a corporate culture that values diverse perspectives and leveraging these collaborations, we aim to provide a compelling value proposition for professionals seeking to make a significant impact in oncology, supporting our growth and long-term success.

Is there a final message you would like to share with our audience?

Our central mission is to enrich “Quality of life around the world” through a patient-centric mindset in our products and services. This commitment is at the heart of our operations and guides our reflection on our purpose, mission, and vision. It is vital for us to continuously evaluate our role and our impact, particularly in the context of China’s dynamic healthcare environment. We aim to foster a cohesive “One DS” culture, which emphasizes delivering innovative and high-quality pharmaceutical solutions tailored to the needs of the Chinese population. By adhering to this vision, we strive to make a meaningful contribution to patient care and support sustainable growth. Our dedication to patient-centered care and innovation is essential for our ongoing success and impact as a leading pharmaceutical company.

[See more interviews](#)