

Glorimar Torres - General Manager/Country Director, Executive Board Member of the PR Pharmaceutical Industry Association, Amgen



My legacy isn't just about growing Amgen's presence—it's about reshaping Puerto Rico's healthcare landscape, expanding access, and creating a future where every patient, regardless of their zip code, receives the care they deserve.

07.05.2025

Tags: [Puerto Rico](#), [Amgen](#), [Rare Diseases](#)

Glorimar Torres, with over 33 years in the pharmaceutical industry, has had a diverse career, starting as a sales representative in Puerto Rico and progressing through key roles at companies like Merck & Co. (MSD), Bristol Myers Squibb, Pfizer, and GlaxoSmithKline (GSK) before joining Amgen. At Amgen, she played a pivotal role in establishing the affiliate in Puerto Rico, which has since grown to become a top player in the local pharmaceutical market. She attributes Amgen's success to its commitment to quality, strong relationships with healthcare professionals, and focus on patient assistance programs. Under her leadership, the company has experienced impressive growth performance year over year since 2020, including a 14% revenue increase in Puerto Rico in 2024. Torres highlights the importance of diversity and inclusion at Amgen, with a workforce that reflects the island's multicultural makeup. She is also focused on expanding access to rare disease treatments and addressing the healthcare challenges in Puerto Rico, particularly the need for more specialists and improved access to care.

With more than 30 years of experience across several major pharmaceutical companies, could you walk us through your professional journey and explain what ultimately brought you to your current role at Amgen?

It has been 33 years in the industry now. I began my career as a sales representative in Puerto Rico, and over the years, I have had the opportunity to work with a number of leading companies. My journey began at Merck, after which I joined Bristol Myers Squibb (BMS). It was at BMS where I first stepped into marketing, which set the stage for my next role at Pfizer. I spent around three and a half years there, managing a significant portfolio. In fact, during one year, I had the privilege of managing four or five products that ranked in the top ten in Puerto Rico.

That experience was pivotal, especially in marketing, as it gave me a deep understanding of strategic thinking for pharmaceutical products, quite different from the over-the-counter space, where direct-to-consumer marketing is prevalent.

After that, I moved to GlaxoSmithKline (GSK), where I spent ten years. During that time, I took on various roles that helped me prepare for leadership positions, such as business unit lead for various portfolios, including the development of the Oncology and Immunology business unit, organisational effectiveness, and strategic planning and operations lead. Eventually, I joined Amgen, where I have now been for nine years. I was part of the team that helped establish Amgen's affiliate here in Puerto Rico - an exciting challenge at the time.

Prior to this, Amgen only had a salesforce reporting directly to Florida. Unlike other players with fully realised local operating companies which have full operations on the island, including finance, HR, and medical departments, Amgen's affiliate focuses solely on sales, marketing, distribution and supporting patient assistance programs, with other departments still receiving support from the US.

Could you share more about Amgen's footprint in Puerto Rico, particularly the distinction between its marketing and manufacturing operations?

Amgen is a 45-year-old biotechnology leader, founded with a single mission: to serve patients. The Puerto Rico affiliate was only set up nine years ago.

Amgen's manufacturing site in Juncos is truly world-class. At the time of the affiliate's establishment, Amgen was already well-known for its manufacturing capabilities, but on the commercial side, it was much less visible in Puerto Rico. However, since the creation of the affiliate, we have made significant strides. Within just nine years, we have moved from being outside the top ten to now being ranked in the top six pharmaceutical companies in Puerto Rico in terms of gross sales.

Our growth year-on-year has been impressive, and what is even more gratifying is that Amgen has become top-of-mind for healthcare professionals, particularly in oncology and rheumatology. This is a tremendous achievement, and we are very proud of it.

What do you think has contributed to this rapid growth, particularly in terms of customer recognition?

The growth can be attributed to several factors, but I believe the most important one is the recognition of Amgen's commitment to quality and the trust we have built within the healthcare community. It is not just about sales, but also about delivering excellent services and building strong relationships with our stakeholders. Our approach is different from many other companies, as we are a biotechnology company, not just a traditional pharma player. This means we offer specialised medicines with particular devices for patient administration that require more training and support, particularly with complex therapies.

We also focus heavily on patient assistance programmes to ensure that patients have access to the support they need. Our stakeholders – from specialists to pharmacists – value our holistic approach and the support we provide at every stage of the treatment process and product fulfilment. This, I believe, has been key to our recognition as a top player in Puerto Rico's pharmaceutical industry.

In Puerto Rico, what are the primary therapeutic areas that Amgen focuses on, and how well is the global portfolio represented locally?

While our global portfolio spans various therapeutic areas, in Puerto Rico, our leading focus is on oncology and inflammation, particularly with our treatment for severe rheumatoid arthritis. However, we also have a strong presence in cardiovascular and asthma, and we are expanding our reach into rare diseases as well. This is particularly exciting for us, as we acquired Horizon Therapeutics, which brought with it a comprehensive rare disease portfolio, integrating new products into our offering here on the island. Puerto Rico is certainly seeing a growing demand for these treatments. This shows that there is a real need for these therapies, and it is clear that the rare disease landscape in Puerto Rico is different from what we might have expected. It is an exciting area for us to be involved in, and we are eager to continue expanding our reach and providing these patients with the care they need.

Amgen's 2024 annual report highlighted an impressive 19% growth in global revenues.

How does the performance in Puerto Rico compare?

Puerto Rico has been performing exceptionally well. Last year, we saw a 14% growth in revenue compared to the previous year, which is quite healthy and robust. This level of growth has been consistent for us over the past few years, with double-digit growth in sales every year since we launched the affiliate on the island in 2015.

From 2020 to 2025, we have seen growth rates of 20 to 22% in gross sales, which is a testament to the demand for our products in the local market. We are proud of this strong performance.

As the healthcare landscape evolves with innovations like biosimilars and precision medicine, how prepared is Puerto Rico in terms of infrastructure to adopt these advancements?

Puerto Rico has been a pioneer in the biosimilars field. Amgen has a robust portfolio of biosimilars, and we were among the first to introduce these products locally. We have been committed to educating stakeholders—physicians, payers, and the public—about the value biosimilars bring to healthcare systems, particularly in terms of cost savings for patients.

It is important to note that biosimilars are not the same as generics. There was some confusion at first, as many assumed that biosimilars were simply generic versions of biologic drugs. But in fact, biosimilars have to meet the same rigorous standards as the reference biologic products, ensuring similar levels of quality, safety, and efficacy. We have conducted extensive clinical trials to compare biosimilars to their reference products, and physicians have become more confident in prescribing them as they have come to understand the process.

For example, Amgen launched the first two oncology biosimilars in Puerto Rico, both of which are biosimilars to well-known biologic treatments for solid tumours. Initially, oncologists were hesitant to switch from established reference brands to these new biosimilars; however, through education and transparency, they became more comfortable given the rigorous clinical testing and patient assistance programs we offer.

As the market matures, there are also ongoing discussions about the interchangeability of biosimilars. Once an interchangeable biosimilar is introduced, it can be substituted at the pharmacy level without requiring a new prescription. This will be a game-changer for access to these treatments.

It is our duty to educate physicians, yet we face a unique challenge with the limited number of speciality doctors on the island, particularly in areas like endocrinology, cardiology, rheumatology and general surgery among others. There is a significant gap between retiring specialists and the number of new specialists being trained, which is projected to worsen by 2030. Although efforts to increase residency programs are underway, these are long-term solutions, and we need immediate alternatives.

As part of Puerto Rico's Pharmaceutical Industry Association (PIA), I am working to bring together stakeholders from commercial, government, and academic sectors to find short-term solutions. However, uncertainty remains regarding federal healthcare funding, and collaboration is key to addressing these challenges before they escalate.

How do regulatory advantages in Puerto Rico, such as earlier access to innovative therapies, translate into real-world patient access to these treatments?

While physicians are generally well-educated and products can be justified through the exception process, gaining access to a new product through health insurance plans isn't always straightforward. Even if a product is approved by the FDA and a physician prescribes it, it can sometimes be a challenge to get the product included in the formulary. This is especially true for new therapies that are not yet widely used or established in the market.

That being said, there is a process in place for health plans to evaluate and approve new treatments, which can be accessed through exception processes. However, if a payer denies approval, the patient may have to pay out of pocket, which is not ideal for many. The overall adoption of innovative therapies in Puerto Rico is improving, but it is still a challenge to get new treatments into the standard formulary quickly. The regulatory landscape is evolving, and we continue to advocate for better access to innovative treatments for Puerto Rican patients.

What are your key objectives for the affiliate in the coming years?

One of our main objectives moving forward is to maintain the profitability of our Puerto Rican affiliate, despite the impending loss of patents on some of our key products. This is certainly a challenge, but we are focused on launching new products with excellence. Amgen has a solid pipeline, and one of my key goals is to ensure we launch new therapies in Puerto Rico at the same time as we do in the US. Our strategy involves leveraging our rare disease portfolio and the new

molecules we are introducing in the cardiovascular, metabolic, and oncology areas.

We are also keen on removing barriers to access. If we encounter any obstacles, we are determined to overcome them by bringing the best talent to Puerto Rico. Our team here is outstanding, and the fact that so many people aspire to work at Amgen fills me with pride. It is this team that will drive the company forward and take us to the next level.

How have you managed to keep your team intact, and what challenges do you face in terms of talent retention?

Puerto Rico is a small island, and the pharmaceutical industry here can sometimes feel quite close-knit. People often move between companies fairly easily, which is part of the challenge. This fluidity is common in Puerto Rico's industry, and it presents a challenge for companies looking to retain their top talent.

A newer challenge we are facing here, however, comes from companies that don't have local operations in Puerto Rico but send representatives from the US to cover the island. For example, some companies based in Miami send reps to manage both Florida and Puerto Rico. These reps are paid US salaries, which aren't benchmarked to Puerto Rican standards. This discrepancy has created a situation where some individuals are lured away by the higher salaries offered by these companies, even if it means splitting their time between Miami and Puerto Rico. It is a tough dynamic to contend with.

That said, at Amgen, I don't face this issue directly. We work hard to ensure our compensation packages are competitive. My team handles complex portfolios and works with physicians in specialised areas, such as 'buy-and-bill' models, which require additional expertise. I'm proud to say that we have a very competitive compensation structure, which has kept retention levels strong.

What final message would you like to share with our global readers regarding Amgen's operations in Puerto Rico?

Puerto Rico is one of the best-performing markets for Amgen, particularly due to the diversity of the healthcare landscape here. We are unique in that we operate across three distinct segments: Medicare, Medicaid, and the commercial market. Yet, despite our close ties to the US, Puerto Rico

faces specific challenges that differ from those in the mainland, such as lower funding for Medicare patients. While we have the same pricing as the US, the financial resources allocated per patient do not match those available on the mainland, which can be a challenge for pharmaceutical companies.

Puerto Rico's healthcare challenges are also compounded by the ageing population. Many young people are migrating to the US, and the services available for the elderly, particularly outside the metropolitan areas, are limited. This creates significant challenges in terms of caregiving and access to necessary services, including healthcare and mass transportation. It is a critical issue that needs attention from both the public and private sectors, as well as the pharmaceutical industry.

Is there anything else you would like to add or any opportunities you see for Puerto Rico in the future?

One opportunity I see is the potential for Puerto Rico to serve as a key hub for US companies. After the COVID-19 pandemic, many headquarters' operations moved to a more flexible, remote model, allowing employees to work from anywhere in the US. This presents an opportunity for talent based in Puerto Rico to lead key areas for companies in the US without needing to relocate. Puerto Rico has incredible talent that could manage areas like product lines, processes, or even entire business units for US-based companies. However, this would require companies to rethink the way they manage payroll, taxes, and the logistics of remote leadership from the island.

Given that Puerto Rico is a US territory, I believe it is entirely feasible for companies to enable employees to manage large, critical operations remotely from here. This could open up significant opportunities for the island, further cementing its role as a vital part of the global pharmaceutical landscape.

Ultimately, my goal is to leave a lasting impact not only for Amgen but for the entire healthcare ecosystem in Puerto Rico. I am focused on improving access to healthcare, especially as we face challenges such as limited access to specialists and an ageing population. It is crucial to ensure that healthcare in Puerto Rico evolves to meet the needs of its people, not just in terms of pharmaceuticals but across all services.

If I can contribute to making healthcare more accessible for the people of Puerto Rico and help address the unique challenges we face, that will be my legacy. Our efforts must go beyond just medicine—it is about creating a comprehensive system that addresses the needs of our ageing

population and ensuring that all Puerto Ricans have access to the care and services they deserve.

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