

Sandra Ramirez - LatAm Head, Astellas Pharma



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Sandra Ramirez, Latam Area Lead, Astellas Pharma, outlines the company's strong momentum across Mexico, Colombia, Argentina, and Chile, highlighting regulatory innovation, strategic partnerships, and expanded patient access. She discusses the strategic importance of Mexico's new Global Capability Centre, the region's growing role in clinical research, and how diversity, integrity, and collaboration underpin Astellas's long-term success in Latin America.

Which markets in your portfolio are currently demonstrating the strongest momentum? And how do you differentiate between Mexico, Colombia, Argentina, and Chile in terms of regulatory reforms, strategic partnerships, and patient access initiatives?

I am pleased to report that all four markets are performing exceptionally well, each progressing according to its respective market size and opportunity landscape. In the South Cone, we commenced operations in 2024, establishing offices dedicated primarily to serving patients within the haematology and oncology therapeutic areas. Looking forward, we anticipate expanding our portfolio to encompass additional innovative technologies.

Colombia remains strategically significant for our organisation. As our inaugural Latin American operation, established in 2016, we have maintained consistent medicine provision despite considerable complexity surrounding patient access and ongoing transformations within the healthcare system. Our ability to navigate these challenges whilst sustaining our product portfolio

and patient support programmes speaks to our operational resilience.

Mexico has emerged as our priority market, having tripled sales over the past three years. The growth trajectory presents exceptional opportunities, underpinned by our steadfast commitment to collaborative partnerships with government entities to ensure expanded patient access throughout the country.

Regarding stakeholder engagement, establishing robust partnerships with principal institutions, communities, non-governmental organisations, and diverse stakeholders constitutes a fundamental priority. Our guiding principle remains unequivocal: healthcare cannot be a privilege – it must be accessible to all. Ensuring medicine availability for patients, who remain at the centre of every decision we undertake, defines our core mission as a pharmaceutical enterprise.

What innovative approaches has Astellas implemented specifically to enhance medicine accessibility?

Innovation constitutes an organisational priority, and within that framework, we must ensure patients can access our treatments. We are addressing access gaps through three interconnected strategic pillars.

Firstly, we are strengthening regulatory frameworks – essential for delivering novel medicines and treatments to patients expeditiously, whilst maintaining alignment with advanced regulatory jurisdictions such as the US and EU. This harmonisation accelerates innovation transfer to our patient populations.

Secondly, we are developing innovative reimbursement models to enhance collaboration with principal institutions across different countries, respecting the unique characteristics of each healthcare system. This requires a sophisticated understanding of local payer dynamics and value demonstration.

Thirdly, and most significantly, we are positioning ourselves as genuine partners with institutions in each market, fostering cross-sector collaboration encompassing private institutions, government entities, medical societies, non-governmental organisations, and key stakeholders. These conversations with authorities and healthcare system actors create leverage points for enhancing health technology assessment processes, reinforcing patient coverage and treatment support, and ensuring timely access to high-quality medicines.

Given the unpredictability of some Latin American governments, how does Astellas manage risk while sustaining long-term partnerships and ensuring continued access to innovation?

The foundational elements of successful cross-sector collaboration are integrity, transparency, and unwavering adherence to our values and principles in every engagement. We invest substantial effort in regulatory compliance and meeting market-specific requirements. Our employees dedicate considerable time to stakeholder integration, consistently maintaining elevated standards of integrity and principle.

This approach mirrors how governments across the region increasingly operate. Ultimately, our shared focus converges on the patient. When stakeholder interests align around patient welfare, productive partnerships naturally emerge.

Which upcoming therapies from Astellas's pipeline hold the greatest potential for Latin American patients, and what groundwork is needed to prepare health systems for their adoption?

Oncology and our innovation pipeline represent strategic priorities as we continuously seek opportunities to impact patients through innovative treatments addressing unmet medical needs. Prostate cancer has been a focal therapeutic area for our organisation, yet significant unmet needs persist. We remain committed to addressing these gaps.

Concurrently, we have expanded our portfolio to support patients within haematology, particularly targeting gastric cancer through novel targeted therapies and immuno-oncology platforms. Precision medicine has become integral to our approach - ensuring each patient receives the treatment specifically suited to their individual needs.

This strategic evolution necessitates continuous workforce development. We are investing in training programmes to ensure our personnel possess the expertise required to support oncology advancement, pipeline development, and innovation implementation. Launching novel treatments presents challenges in Latin America, as in any global region. However, our priority remains delivering optimal patient benefit through these advanced therapeutics.

What is the strategic role of Astellas's new Global Centre of Excellence in Mexico, and how does it reflect your long-term commitment to the region?

I am genuinely enthusiastic about this initiative. We commenced planning last year for implementing the Global Centre of Excellence. The company has established three such centres globally - in Poland, India, and now Mexico. Having this facility in Latin America, specifically Mexico, represents a significant honour and strategic commitment.

We inaugurated the centre officially several weeks ago. This facility will deliver services to multiple countries worldwide across various organisational functions. Most significantly, it creates substantial opportunities for Mexican professionals and talent from other nations to join our organisation, working within an exceptional culture and high-quality environment.

I take considerable pride in this expansion. We anticipate concluding calendar year 2025 with over one hundred employees in March, with continued growth planned as we extend the Global Centre of Excellence capabilities.

Given that sister centres exist in Poland and India, why did Mexico emerge as the optimal location for this strategic investment?

Several factors converged to make Mexico compelling. Geographic proximity to the US represents a primary consideration. Secondly, Mexico offers access to exceptional talent. Throughout our recruitment of these one hundred employees, we have attracted highly qualified professionals, including individuals from various countries interested in relocating to Mexico - a testament to the market's appeal.

The availability of sophisticated talent in Mexico, particularly English-speaking professionals, constitutes another critical factor. Language capability is essential for our global operations, and we have successfully recruited personnel with advanced English proficiency.

This Global Centre of Excellence represents a long-term investment in Mexico, leveraging local talent whilst creating opportunities for growth, innovation, and professional development. We take considerable pride in cultivating a diverse environment, integrating the Global Centre alongside our commercial organisation. This brings together individuals from multiple generations, varied professional backgrounds, and different perspectives, supporting our vision to align with Mexico's governmental development plan through 2031.

What does your recent recruitment success reveal about the talent landscape in Mexico and Latin America more broadly?

I am genuinely delighted with our recruitment outcomes – how rapidly we have hired resources across diverse organisational areas, and the substantial interest demonstrated by professionals seeking to learn about Astellas and become part of our organisation. The calibre of Mexican talent and the broader Latin American talent pool that will support our future operations is truly exceptional.

Talent and leadership are central to our progress in Latin America, where 54% of our workforce comprises women and one-third of leadership roles are held by women. Our employee engagement currently stands at an impressive 92%. As a female leader, I take immense pride in the strides we've made recently. We have successfully filled all open positions with individuals from diverse backgrounds and experiences, including international professionals. The dynamic we've cultivated in Mexico – bringing together people with different perspectives and professional histories – is truly remarkable. We fully expect to see continued growth in workforce diversity, which we believe is fundamental to driving innovation and enhancing performance across the region.

Given this recruitment success and centre establishment, what lessons can other Astellas operations globally derive from your approach to talent acquisition and culture development?

Two critical lessons have emerged from this experience. Firstly, ensuring cross-collaboration between the Global Centre of Excellence and commercial teams is essential. Whilst Global Centre personnel support different geographies, operating cohesively as one unified Astellas organisation remains paramount.

Secondly, culture is fundamental. For all new Global Centre employees, we ensure they genuinely feel integrated into the Astellas organisation. They must understand our fundamental purpose – serving patients who remain central to everything we undertake. Embracing them as integral members of our organisation creates the foundation for sustained success.

Transitioning to clinical research, how is Astellas contributing to regional research capacity development, and what steps could further elevate Latin America's role in global clinical trials?

This represents one of the most critical considerations in any dialogue between healthcare systems and the pharmaceutical industry. We must ensure continued growth in clinical trials and research, and development activities throughout our region.

Astellas remains deeply committed to enhancing Latin America's role in clinical research. We currently operate clinical research centres in Mexico, Colombia and Argentina. The Latin American population offers tremendous value for clinical development programmes. Supporting patients with significant unmet medical needs through clinical trial access constitutes a strategic priority.

We are advancing new initiatives to identify additional opportunities for expanding clinical trial capacity across Latin American countries. Critical to this endeavour is governmental partnership. We continue strengthening regulatory requirements and processes across nations, particularly where we maintain commercial presence.

Our objective is to increase regional participation in global studies and establish Latin America as a benchmark for clinical trial quality and execution agility.

Looking towards the next decade, what constitutes non-negotiable requirements for Astellas's sustained success in Latin America?

Transparency and integrity in all our activities are unequivocally non-negotiable. These principles constitute our organisational DNA and underpin our success.

I would also emphasise the imperative of continued collaboration with stakeholders globally to ensure healthcare does not remain a privilege. We possess the capacity to make our medicines available to all patients, enabling everyone to receive appropriate treatment. We remain committed to supporting patient access and enhancing quality of life for individuals worldwide.

As a leader, my responsibility extends beyond patients to encompass our employees and the communities where we operate. We must maintain employee engagement and motivation in the service of patients, whilst demonstrating unwavering commitment to supporting people and communities throughout our operational footprint, particularly across Latin America.

Beyond managing corporate operations, leaders bear primary responsibility for supporting people, serving patients, and driving meaningful change.

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