Interview with Cesar Buendia Sardon, General Manager – Chile, Peru, Ecuadar and Bolivia, Eli Lilly Chile

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Tags: Eli Lilly Chile

Lilly's portfolio ranges from products for cardiovascular diseases to neurological conditions. How has your portfolio developed in Chile? What therapeutic areas is Lilly favoring in the Chilean context?

Lilly Chile has a long commitment of bringing innovative pharmaceuticals to the country and the majority of our products are very specialized. In particular, we have a very competitive line in what concerns medicines for the central nervous system, including schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, ADHD and depression. In the segment of depression we have two blockbuster products; the first of which is Prozac and now Cymbalta. Cymbalta is a product that was recently approved for new pain indications.

Aside from this, Lilly's product for erectile dysfunction is currently the market leader in the branded market in Chile. Lilly has brought new products for the oncology segment to improve the quality of living and extend the life of cancer patients, mainly for lung and breast cancer among others.

Also the company has made an important contribution in the area of Diabetes. Since our beginning, Lilly has been one of the most innovative companies in the area of diabetes and we recently launched a new product in this therapeutic area that was derived from the saliva of a desert lizard found in Texas and Mexico.

Ultimately, Lilly's aim is to provide products that respond to specific needs of the patients that can benefit from them.

Speaking about the success of your products for depression in Chile, many companies that we have met have mentioned the high incidence of depression in the country. What is the cause behind this and how can it be prevented or treated more effectively?

Probably what has happened in Chile is that depression is better diagnosed than in most Latin American countries because there is a strong psychiatric and medical body in the country. Also many times in the evolution of treatments when a new product has been launched into a market, apparently the prevalence of a disease at the beginning is low. However, a few years later we may find that there is a considerable increment in the number of patients diagnosed and treated with that same disease. This might be because that disease has moved into the scope of local doctors that counts with new and each time better alternatives to treat diseases, this is an important contribution of innovation. There are several examples of this like in different kinds of cancer, erectile dysfunction, etc.

I think this is somewhat what happened with the case of depression in Chile, which explains why patients today are better treated and diagnosed; it is not that Chileans are predisposed to being depressed. This is a condition that today is recognized and treated by the government and the public health institutions, to such a point that a patient is entitled to have medical leave when diagnosed with depression.

The Chilean pharmaceutical market is known for its highly competitive environment lead by generic manufacturers which produce very low-cost products. How has Lilly positioned itself in the competitive Chilean market?

I am a believer that generic producers have a legitimate and important role in any healthcare system and are a valuable tool for physicians and patients. This role is premised upon the existence of proper regulatory safeguards for bioequivalence and manufacturing to ensure therapeutic efficacy and safety.

The lifecycle of a product begins with its development, and this is where innovative companies such as Lilly are relevant. Innovation is the lifeblood of the pharmaceutical sector because companies like Lilly invest heavily in R&D to bring new treatments for unmet patient needs. After patent protection have expired generic manufacturers play an important role to provide mass access to those products and free resources for more innovative treatments.

This is why it is essential to ensure that patent protection is respected. This way this virtuous life circle can continue, in benefit of the health care system of the country and mainly of the patients that are in need of new treatments.

Based on your previous experiences in several other Latin American countries, what would you say are the main challenges for Lilly in Chile today?

I believe our main challenge in Chile and beyond is to continue providing our clients with innovation. It is our goal to find new treatments that address unmet needs that are not currently satisfied by other products in the market. Of course innovation has become more costly over the years, particularly because there are increasing procedures that raise the cost and length of researching and launching a new product. This is parallel to a demand for lower prices from patients and governments. In light of all this, and given Chile's highly competitive environment, I would say that the main challenge is indeed to continue providing new innovative treatments to address unmet medical needs, which is our main objective, in a way that is timely and cost-effective.

Chile has had instances of patent violations in the past. Has Lilly experienced any violations of its products in Chile? How have you dealt with the issue of a lax regulatory environment?

As regards this issue, Lilly shares the same position as the association that represents innovative companies, namely the CIF. I believe that to face these kinds of issues it is important to approach the situation through the association as a unified group of companies that hold the same position. As an independent company, Lilly in Chile has been looking to always work in partnership with the authorities to ensure that our intellectual property is correctly registered in the country and therefore respected by all the players of the market. Through the association we have also been working in partnership with the Chilean government to ensure that the terms of free trade agreements are fully and correctly implemented in the country. In conclusion, Lilly, as a innovative company, will always stand by the respect of patents of our products, both as an individual company and as a member of the association of innovators in Chile. This is part of understanding that patents are intended to provide incentives for continued innovation that enhances the public good.

There are indications that Chile's high GDP and HDI, as well as its qualified scientific community make it an ideal place to conduct clinical trials. How has Lilly been exploiting this opportunity? What can be done to expand the number of clinical trials in Chile?

It is true, Chile is a very good place to develop Clinical Trial activities. They have even a Government Agency (CORFO) interested in promoting R&D initiatives. We are currently running several protocols in Chile through Contract Research Organizations (CROs) and we expect to increase our Clinical Trials activities in the future in resonance with the increment of NME reaching Phase 3 in the years to come.

Lilly is recognized worldwide as a great company to work for. What does Lilly do in Chile to attract and retain the best talent?

As you have mentioned, Lilly has built an image as a company that values and respects its people and that fosters integrity and excellence in all aspects of a professional life. Working by Lilly´s

values has been an important source of retaining the best talent in Chile.
Lilly has always looked for the most talented people, and this is done firstly through a stringent selection process and then continuously providing training to contribute to the professional development of the person's career within the company. Of course, this is an ongoing process and one that we will continue to invest on.
We have also found that empowering employees and giving them space for initiatives and decision making have been very motivating for them. Finally, working in a world class company dedicated to innovation and well respected in the industry has been also valuable for our employees.

Given that you are a regional manager for Peru, Ecuador, Bolivia and Chile, how would you characterize your management style in order to adapt to the cultural differences of all these countries?

I think what is most important for me is to respect diversity and each country's cultural specificities. Saying that, the lessons that can be learned from each country's differences and experiences is also a source to generate synergies within the teams. Another important aspect is the development of the employees allowing them to perform by empowering them and giving them full responsibility of their work. As you can imagine, it is very difficult for me to be present in all the countries at any given time, so I have to provide the appropriate guidance, delegation, training and support to teams so they can take timely and sound decisions in each market. It is my role to coach and to train the managers below me so that they can drive the teams while I am not able to do so directly. It is essential for them to understand our mission what we do and why we are doing it. Of course, all of this is only accomplished once you have motivated and talented employees, and that is the key to a successful team.

What is your vision for Lilly in Chile for the next 3 to 5 years? Where would you like to take the company by then?

The vision is to be a more successful company, with an important role in contributing to the patients and the health care system in Chile through new and better treatments for the Chilean population. Also having a professional team highly motivated and talented capable to successfully face the challenges of a very challenging and evolving industry.
The first priority for Lilly as a company is clearly innovation, and through this we would like to continuously contribute to the healthcare system here. It is our role to bring to the country new products for diseases in therapeutic areas that still have unmet patient needs in Chile. Also we would like to actively participate with the authorities and through the pharmaceutical association to contribute with see processes streamlined so that every player in the industry fulfills its role, including innovators and generic manufacturers. Everyone has a role to play and can contribute to the development of the overall system, and Lilly wants to see this happen. As long as there are

patients that can benefit from innovative products then we as company will strive to provide them.

What is your final message for our readers of Pharmaceutical Executive about the commitment of Lilly to Chile?

I would like to reaffirm Lilly's commitment to contribute to the Chilean health through innovative products that help its population to have healthier and longer lives.

We want to accompany the country in its process of improving its healthcare system.

We are here for the long-term, always striving to improve our own operations with a more qualified and efficient team to provide Chileans with the best products and services that Lilly can offer.

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