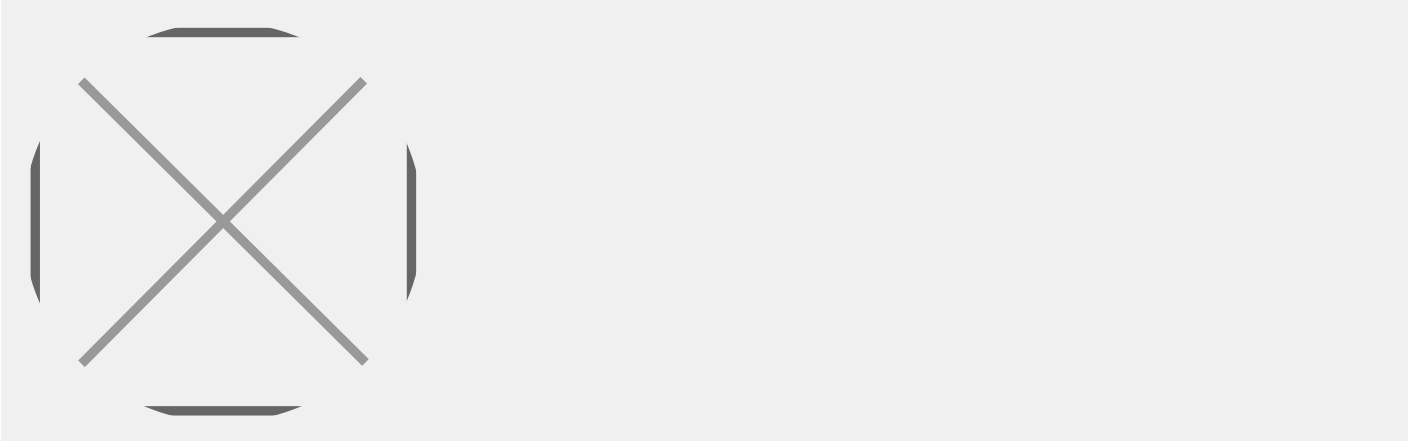
Interview with Melvin Oscar D’souza, Managing Director, Novo Nordisk India Private Limited



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Novo Nordisk seems somewhat of an exception to the MNCs that recently entered India, as it already set up its HQ in Bangalore in 1994. How do you explain this relatively early entry?

Traditionally, Novo Nordisk’s strategy has been to be in the market very early. We aspire to create value in the market by working closely with our key stakeholders.

India has been a focus market of Novo Nordisk for several decades. We have seen companies in the same space entering the market and then leaving. In a chronic therapy segment like diabetes, you need create sustainable value for your end users; be it through the services you offer or products which address real needs! Continuously, focussing on these aspects has helped built good credibility with our customers and end users.

We have consciously adopted a model of being there for the people with diabetes and largely focused on creating the right environment and infrastructure for education and awareness in the segment. Diabetes is serious disorder and a challenge in India. Reaching out to the estimated 50 million people with diabetes will require large scale efforts both by the industry and the government in the coming years. Over the years, we at Novo Nordisk have been continuously working on several projects and with like minded partners to address this core issue
Early market entry and working with sustainable plans that genuinely serve the patients, have helped build our franchise.

Last June you launched Victoza® for type II diabetes. What made this treatment so revolutionary?

Victoza® (liraglutide) has a very strong product profile, among the current diabetes treatment regimens. The customers we have talked to have expressed very positive experiences. In a way, this new treatment regimen has opened several opportunities for the future. Testimony to this is the initial acceptance and the product performance in the GLP-1 segment. Within the first 6 months, we have achieved 80% market share in the GLP-1 segment.

Is this a milestone for the Indian patient?

If we are truly talking about changing diabetes, I see Victoza® as another step on that route. Victoza® allows us to reach patients early in the treatment cascade and help effective control the disorders.

As we see diabetes today, it is a complex disorder and needs products and treatment regimens, which can address real needs – Victoza® is a step in this direction.

Other players have been quite proud about the effective delivery mechanisms they have brought to the market. Novo Nordisk also has its NovoPen, the FlexPen, etc. How successful have you been at launching these devices in India, and how open has the Indian population been to their uptake?

Having a consistent market share of 70% in the device market in India, is a good testimony to the device preference!

We currently have the widest portfolio of devices both for human and modern insulin. FlexPen® and NovoPen® have set the standards in delivering accurate doses and continuously redefining convenience. We will continue to strengthen our presence by offering the next generation devices very soon in the market.

We also have an edge in the way the technology and product are closely developed – Novo Nordisk is the only company that has its own brand of devices, needles and insulin.

Diabetes is of course a disease that will also require a change in lifestyle among many patients. If not, India is set to become the country with the highest number of sufferers by 2030. Is there really a cure?

It depends at how you look at cure. Diabetes is a complex progressive disorder. It can happen to anyone. Genetic predisposition combined with changing lifestyles makes Indians even more susceptible to this disorder.

Currently there is no cure for diabetes, but it can be controlled if it is understood and treated early. It is not only critical to have the right treatment options available but there is also a need to create an environment which will facilitate good education and awareness about this disorder.

While we continue to hope that the future holds the promise for a possible cure for diabetes, we need to earnestly work towards prevention – that is the closest we can today talk about curbing the pandemic.

How do you go about creating this awareness, and changing the lifestyles of the people?

There are two aspects to diabetes education: education of healthcare professionals who will increasingly engage in treating a growing patients population and creating awareness of the disorder in the community.

We see ourselves not only as a responsible company that is involved in making and supplying quality insulin in this country over several decades but also as an organisation proactively involved in setting up projects for education and awareness .

Novo Nordisk in India has setup the Novo Nordisk Education Foundation as early as 1997 which engages in structured education programs for healthcare professionals, patients, general public and running projects like NovoAid – which provides free insulin to underprivileged children.

To reach out to the rural population, initiatives such as the Mobile Clinic have been set up. How successful was this?

We initiated the Mobile Clinic as a pilot program way back in 2006, to test our outreach program. The population outside our main cities who have limited access to healthcare would benefit from this initiative – detect, educate and direct people to take help. Though a small initiative, we have several learning's we can take forward.

Novo Nordisk globally has helped setup the World Diabetes Foundation which incidentally, has programs in India , which have been modelled on the mobile clinic concept.

2.1 % of India's GDP is said to go to type II diabetes related expenses. Do you feel that the government recognizes the potential for companies, such as Novo Nordisk, to contribute to reducing this burden of healthcare?

The center and many state governments have realised the importance of tackling the diabetes pandemic early. Many of the State Governments we have interacted have already taken steps to facilitate early detection and prevention. At Novo Nordisk we would like continuously engage in initiatives where we can make a real difference.

Novo Nordisk has additionally looked into certain other strengths of India. The global data management centre, for example, has been moved from Singapore to India. How successful have you been at tapping into these other strengths?

For Novo Nordisk A/S today, India is one of the global hubs where our shared services are integrated. Novo Nordisk recognises the unique strengthen that India brings in this space.

What makes India an attractive destination for clinical trials?

India is an attractive destination because of its large and diverse patient pool, increasing number of healthcare professionals and institutions involved in clinical research space, world class infrastructure, high quality data management facilities and standards which are tested by global regulatory bodies.

What makes Novo Nordisk a unique place to work, for you to retain the people you need, to embark on these ambitious growth plans?

Novo Nordisk has the unique distinction of being a therapy leader with a very strong culture of innovation.

This is our focus and our strength in the market – ability to discuss innovative products, initiatives and science with our customers. For a large sales and marketing organisation this is a unique opportunity to develop strong skills sets which can be nurtured in the long run. In addition, we also provide an environment for people to experience opportunities in an international setting

You have been with Novo Nordisk for 16 years yourself. Which of these factors kept you in the company for all that time?

I truly believe in the depth of what Novo Nordisk has to offer. The good feeling that you can really make a difference for the people who would use your products and the challenge of working in a complex yet rewarding environment is a very rewarding !

While we have our fair share of challenge, it is very important to enjoy work – Working with a dedicated team of professionals who put in extraordinary efforts to make a difference, makes it that much more satisfying.

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