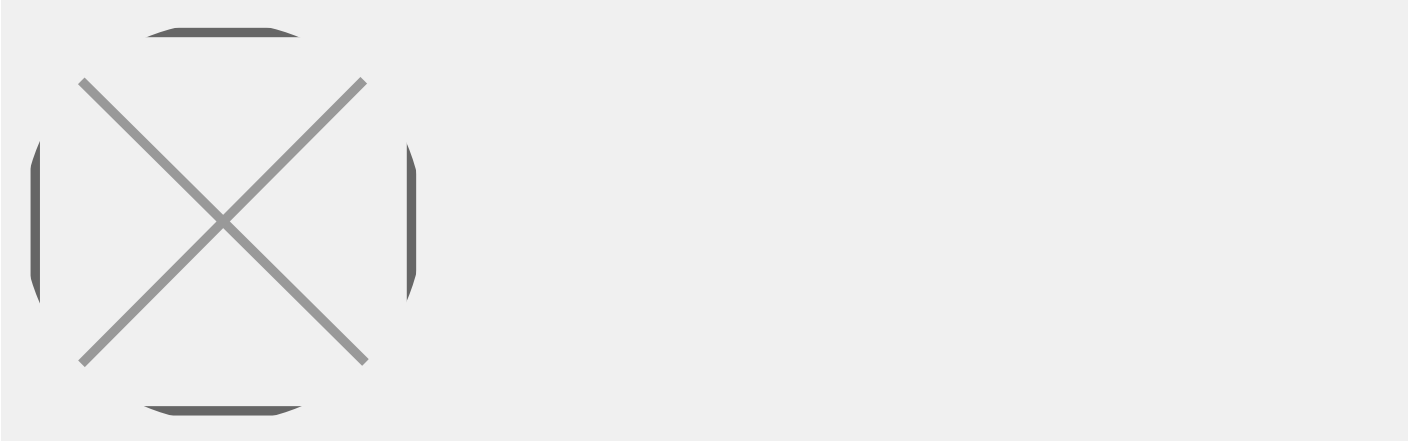
Interview with Warren Chen, Country Manager, Celgene Taiwan



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Could you please give our readers an overview of the importance of Taiwan for Celgene in a regional and a global context? What is attractive in Taiwan for Celgene?

Celgene is very new entrant in the multinational context as a latecomer to the market. As a biopharmaceutical company it is only 20 years old. The company only very recently arrived in Asia. Until it was clear that Revlimid would be commercialised, Thalidomide was our only product and ex-US it was licensed to Pharmion, so the US market was all we had. That changed around five years ago when the company started to see the opportunities in other markets around the world, and began their international expansion in Europe. After three years of development in European countries, Celgene started to become more adventurous. It was clear at that time that Asia was becoming increasingly important in a global context for big pharma. Asia was a natural progression in global expansion The company opened its regional office in Singapore and began there, and started to learn from the local experiences, local people, local customers and doctors the best way to approach the market.

Celgene is very specific in its marketed products: haematology and oncology. How can these therapeutic areas be turned into an advantage in Taiwan? How strong is the business here?

Celgene currently only has US/European data on its products: it is lacking Asian studies on its drugs. When the company introduced its drugs into this Asian region, it faced the challenge of overcoming the ethnic difference – having to show that there is no difference in the efficacy of its

products in an Asian culture. The fact is that there probably is no ethnic difference, as the USA is a melting pot of races and ethnicities. However, despite this being the case, Celgene had no data to prove that this was the case. This is where the company has to invest, from PK/PD studies, all the way to Phase II and III clinical trials, to show our drugs work for the people in this region.

You have a very long-term game to play. How have you begun this process over the last two years, and what have you achieved in this time as Country Manager?

I want to position Taiwan to play a leading role in the Asia Pacific region. Celgene is only now embarking on a China strategy but the market there still has many questions. Not everything is in place yet, and guidelines and policies are not so clear. So we have to have a business model to copy in those areas where Chinese is spoken. I would like to copy Taiwan's experience to China, especially in medical development. Many Taiwanese doctors have western educations and experiences compared to Chinese doctors. We have many good ideas here. This is a very good opportunity for Celgene's drug development. However, the problem is that the Taiwan's population size is very small. Once a good idea is produced in Taiwan and it goes to the study phase, it takes a long time to wait for the result. If we can cooperate with Chinese doctors using Taiwan's ideas and China's population it will be mutually beneficial. Right now the company is already starting to talk about this kind of approach.

We have heard from a few people about the idea of using Taiwan as a gateway to China to export the excellence of the medical profession and take advantage of China's population size. How have you started this?

To achieve this goal long-term communication is needed. In 1998 I was began cooperation with the TCOG, The Taiwan Collaborative Organisational Group. We started cross-strait communication, especially in the medical field. Politically the two countries are separate, but in the healthcare sector we have the same aims: to care for the patient and the treatment. No barrier is there to separate us from achieving this kind of objective.

Today, this work has already borne fruit, as we can see from Novartis and Roche who have already have established a very good platform to invite experts from China to Taiwan. When I began as Country Manager of Celgene Taiwan in 2008, I was very willing to resume this kind of approach. Right now I am in charge of Celgene, and have a better position to talk to my head office in order to get support. Right now we already have something in development, and within one or two years we will hopefully see some collaboration on a project.

Did Celgene see the potential in this idea?

The Taiwanese market is very small, the potential for growth is very limited, and China is experiencing very dramatic growth with even more expected in the years to come. We can use

Taiwan’s experience to help in this market, because Taiwan was westernized earlier than China.

Since arriving you have grown the business to nine employees. How does Celgene view the future potential for Celgene Taiwan?

We are still in a very preliminary phase, because at a global level Celgene is still continuing to acquire companies, and bringing new drugs into its pipeline in this way. Celgene in Taiwan only has two drugs right now, but we still have a very large number of drugs in development. In Asia, only two countries have reimbursement markets, Korea and Taiwan, which make them very important markets. Our drug is very niche, to treat only a very small number of patients.

Celgene is different from other companies in that we are focused very strongly on drug safety. We take care of the whole process from when patients receive the drug to how the drug performs not only in terms of efficacy but also side effects. Our company value is ‘Passion for the Patient’. Normally in Taiwan the person in a company in charge of drug safety has other responsibilities, such as taking care of drug information, medical affairs or education. In Celgene, our Drug Safety person does that job exclusively. They are trained at head office, and when they return it is their job to both educate the rest of the company and make sure that drug safety is tackled proactively rather than reactively.

You started Celgene Taiwan on your own two years ago and have since recruited an office full of people. How did you select the right people to come and work for the company?

At different stages of the company’s growth I will need very different people. In the start up period, the first one or two years, I need people who have a very strong entrepreneurial spirit. Most people will naturally come from big pharma. In these large companies, life is very comfortable, and there is no need to fight for anything. Today, I do not need people like this. Right now my employees need to be independent and ready for challenges. If you want something, you can have it, but you have to go and get it. In other companies you just pick up the phone. That’s a different mentality. For the first six months after establishing the affiliate here I was not only the country manager but also dealing with every aspect of the business, from sales to HR to marketing. Many people currently working in good positions in big pharma companies don’t have the energy to start again from nothing, and today I do not need these people. Perhaps in five years time it will be different, and I can invite these people to maintain the business.

We hear so much about the Taiwanese entrepreneurial spirit. Where do you think it comes from?

Not everyone in Taiwan is like this. I can only give you my thoughts. I like new things. I wanted to solve problems. I like to see different things and different people. I will always take a challenge over an easy life. This is how I get my satisfaction from life.

Do you think Celgene did the right thing by choosing someone Taiwanese to start the operations here?

For this I have to thank my former boss David Russell, who is currently assigned to Celgene China. David is a real entrepreneur. He chose a local for Taiwan as he felt this would prove more beneficial particularly if the local manager had a good grasp of English. If one wants to use expatriates you use them at the beginning particularly if they are within the company. Long term, local is better.

What is your roadmap for the next five years? Where do you want to be in five years time?

Since day one I have said that I will make Celgene very successful in Taiwan as a role model not only for Chinese society but also for South East Asia. That is my first objective. My second goal is for the company to be so pleased with my work in Taiwan that I could expand my area of responsibility to possibly include China or an even larger territory. This is another big challenge and I really want to take it. I am hungry for that market, and that is my priority. What I have done today is to pave the way to cross the strait to China. When Celgene hired me I was working for TTY Biopharm, a local company; I came there from the position of BU Head of Oncology at Sanofi Aventis. I left Sanofi Aventis because TTY offered me a position to take care of China and Taiwan. I don’t really consider the package. This makes my life meaningful, and means I can enjoy the project.

Do you have a final message that you would like to send to our readers about Celgene in Taiwan?

Celgene in Taiwan today is now very small and almost invisible, but very soon you will find out that Celgene is one of the major players in its specific therapeutic areas.

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