

Interview: Dr. Ricardo Avila - Director Medico Carlos, Murillo Medina - Country Manager, Pfizer, Chile



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Pfizer will invest in a precision medical center studying new genome-based diagnostic technologies for cancer in Chile.

It is the first center of excellence that Pfizer is building in Chile and in Latin America. Dr. Ricardo Avila, Director Medico and Carlos Murillo Medina, Country Manager Chile at Pfizer stress the importance of this center to the company and the nation.

September last year Pfizer announced the opening of a USD 21 million precision medicine center of excellence in Chile. What is the importance of this center and how will it contribute to Pfizer's commitment to Chile?

CM: This is definitely a big step for Pfizer, not only in Chile but worldwide. It is the first center of excellence that we are building in Chile and in Latin America.

The investment is intended to enhance Pfizer's precision medicine approach to help understand the underlying biology of disease and identify patients likely to benefit from a new drug. In the future, this approach could make it possible to precisely select disease targets and improve the safety and effectiveness of medical treatments in real-world practice. The center, located in Santiago, will coordinate with our precision medicine center in La Jolla, California, and where until now this type of research was conducted. In line with the goal of making Chile an innovation hub in the world, we are moving towards basic research with developed technology.

Chile has taken significant steps to incorporate biotechnology into its economy. Through a series of powerful initiatives, including a new regulatory framework and economic incentives, it seeks to develop a world-class biotechnology sector. The construction of this center of excellence will contribute to the consolidation of Chile and the region as a center of research in biomedicine for the rest of the world. We are confident that others will follow, and that our commitment and success will attract more investment and research programs in Chile and Latin America.

We have chosen to build the center in Chile because of the country's favourable R&D incentives. Moreover Chile is one of South America's most stable and prosperous nations.

RA: In fact, we just came out of a meeting at the **Camara de la Industria Farmaceutica de Chile, the** chamber that groups the innovative pharmaceutical companies, where the members got together to listen to our plans. The feedback has been extremely positive and as a result we have received many inquiries about the newly build center. It seems that there is an increasing interest from the industry to increase investment in the country.

We expect to begin operations in 2014, and among our objectives is that our work will be in collaboration with Chilean universities and research centers with the goal of developing qualified and experienced human capital in R&D in the medium term. We are open to all sorts of collaboration and are currently in the process of building a network.

What makes this project special is that we are partnering with the government to develop technology and research. The Chilean Economic Development Agency (CORFO) is investing USD 7 million in the research center and it must be said that CORFO's International R&D Centers of Excellence program has been fundamental in forging the path to make Chile a regional innovation hub.

Using the latest technology, the center of excellence for precision medicine, will focus on research for the treatment of cancer and to establish more accurate diagnoses. The center will be developing data that is going to allow the company to apply and use around the world. Pfizer Chile will therefore be increasingly important to our global operations and not only in terms of sales.

What is Chile's potential to position itself as a biotech hub for Latin America?

CM: I believe that Pfizer has opened the door to this possibility and I expect the ecosystem to start flourishing soon.

The country and therefore the pharmaceutical market are relatively small. But for us it is not about the size of the market. The Chilean government has approved incentives aimed at generating an

environment more favourable for innovation. Together with Pfizer there have been a growing number of businesses in Chile pursuing innovative projects.

We have started to recruit people and the level of talent in Chile that we have been able to find has been really interesting. Chileans are extremely professional and distinguished, and I think it is important to showcase these qualities and make use of this potential. I believe that Chile can contribute to the talent pool of Pfizer and the biotech area in general.

Pfizer's previous Country Manager for Chile, Monica Zerpa, told us in 2010:" One of our biggest challenges in Chile involves the government's dominant role in regulating the healthcare system". "Because of budget constraints, the government favors low-cost generic medicines produced by local laboratories". How has this evolved over the past four years?

CM: What you find in Chile is not different than any other market. On the one side there is the need to provide access and on the other to control costs. A logic consequence is that governments are moving to lower cost suppliers. This global trend drives the growth of the generic industry.

Some however regard Chile as a contradiction. *The country* is one of Latin America's fastest growing economies and has one of the *highest GDP* per capita in the region. Moreover looking at the macro statistics of health, Chile has one of the lowest infant mortality rates and has one of the highest life expectancy. In this regard the country is performing extremely well.

A particularity for Chile is the reimbursement issue or access to high value therapies. Today the country has developed to a point where citizens are no longer satisfied with what they have. Chile has made tremendous progress over the last decade in terms of improving the quality of life of its citizens but at the same time cancer patients do not have access to the latest treatment. And patients who do are paying huge amounts of money out of pocket. This is a tipping point and the new government will need to work on this. There needs to be change in providing reimbursement and access to high value therapies to patients.

What is your market share today and how is Pfizer positioning itself to remain competitive in the Chilean market?

CM: Our market share is around 4.2%. It depends on what month you are looking at or how far you take the information but in terms of market share we are either number five or number six on the Chilean market.

This ranking however is only taking into account the retail market captured by IMS Health. Having that said, Pfizer conducts half of its business in the retail market and half in the institutional market. Combining these markets, Pfizer would be one of the largest players in the country.

Mr. Murillo, today we are celebrating your first year as country manager for Chile. Looking back, what has been the most challenging thing for you to deal with in your first year as country manager?

CM: The biggest challenge has been to oversee the processes—transforming the organization. Pfizer Chile was an organization based on trade products with a high presence in primary care. Over the year we have taken a broader perspective on the business. We have increased our presence to better target the massive institutional market and prepared ourselves for new product launches. This has required us to redesign our internal structure to directly address the needs of the Chilean market.

Furthermore across all our activities we seek to engage with stakeholders. Working in partnership is crucial in developing and delivering some of our major commitments.

Pfizer opened in Chile in 1959 as the first innovator in the country. This long history of leadership in the market surely comes with special responsibilities. How would you describe the company's commitment to the population?

CM: Chile has a high global priority for the country and the center of excellence for precision medicine that we are building in collaboration with the Chilean government is definitely demonstrating our commitment to the country and its population.

Our ultimate goal is for patients to have wider access to our products in order to increase the health of the Chilean population. And we are aware that the only way to ensure that people have access to innovative medicines and quality health care anywhere is working with all the stakeholders including medical providers, patients, health insurance companies, governments, and NGOs.

Last year we have created a new department solely focusing on access and reimbursement. This department conducts pharmacology studies in close collaboration with the government. In addition we have made significant investment in customer engagement programs with the aim to improve the service that we offer to our clients so that they perceive not only the exceptional quality of our products but also the added value of the services that we offer.

What is your personal vision for the future of the Chilean pharmaceutical industry and

the specific role Pfizer will play within it?

RA: Pfizer will continue to lead the way in precision medicine and our center of excellence is going to reinforce that position. In fact I am quite enthusiastic about XALKORI, a prescription medicine used to treat non-small cell lung cancer that has spread to other parts of the body and is caused by a defect in a gene called ALK (anaplastic lymphoma kinase). While previous medicines killed all the cells, XALKORI only kills the bad cells by blocking the action of the ALK fusion gene, which appears to cause this type of cancer to grow.

Overall our mission is to support all the physicians and health care practitioners about Pfizer's therapeutical areas in order for them to make the best choice for the patients.

CM: In the next three years I aim to increase the importance of Pfizer Chile for our global operations. The precision medicine center of excellence is a first step in that direction. At this point in time the plans for the center are in paper but it is our responsibility to turn this project into a success in the coming years.

Moreover, we need to finalize the transition to become a different company. We will change our areas of priority and redesign our internal structure to directly address the needs of the Chilean market.

In conclusion, Chile represents a market filled with opportunities for growth and improvements. This country is for our company an example of how we can work in partnership with the government, and through the pharmaceutical association, in order to improve the healthcare of local population. We are committed to strengthen our activities in the market and to grow more than other companies. This is also in coordination with the community and with the greater Chilean population.

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