Roche Argentina – Osvaldo de la Fuente, General Manager



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The general manager of Roche Argentina weighs up the factors that have allowed the country to be included among the top three performing markets in the region for Roche, and explains how the country has become an increasingly important location for clinical trials for the company.

What have been the main achievements for Roche Argentina in the last five years?

Roche Argentina decided to concentrate all of its efforts into two different divisions: pharmaceuticals and diagnostics. After being in Argentina for more than 80 years, Roche stands in a very good position within the Argentinian pharma industry with the highest commitment towards the sector. In Pharma, Roche Argentina has been able to consolidate its leadership in oncology. Moreover, we are the absolute leaders in biotech products as well.

We have kept our leadership, with increasingly innovative products in our portfolio. In the last three years, we have introduced biopharmaceuticals which have become a major milestone in oncology treatment in decades; these biopharmaceuticals are revolutionary in the mechanism of action and have optimal results in terms of life quality for patients.

As for our work to be the best place to work, this is an ongoing task.We are focused on attracting and retaining talent. We are alert to the needs and interests of young professionals, adding benefits to our value proposition to make it more competitive and to become a preferred employer.



What is the importance of Argentina for Roche within the Latin American context?

Argentina represents the third most important market in Latin America, right behind Brazil and Mexico. Having said that, is important to mention that Venezuela and Argentina have similar figures: they perform at almost the same level.

What are the main priorities of Roche Argentina today?

Our main priority is to be able to launch our innovative products that we have in our pipeline. At the same time, we try to provide the access of those products to the majority of the population.

Today, diseases that formally couldn’t be cured can be cured if you are diagnosed at the right moment and if you are treated at the right time. We want to promote the advantages of using our products to all of our stakeholders.

One of the areas where we are continuously learning and putting a lot of our efforts, as it is considered crucial for the organization, is in access to treatments, unmet diagnostic and medical needs.

The pharmaceutical industry must be part of the solution, together with health authorities and policy makers, to improve access to new diagnoses and treatments, and to ensure each patient receives what he/she needs. This is a priority all healthcare stakeholders must share.

At a corporate level, we are also investing a lot of time in finding the best talent for our organization. Talent management is the key to attract and retain the best professionals. We provide ongoing training and development opportunities, both nationally and internationally. Our R&D team has grown dramatically in the last years.

We are currently recruiting young professionals, attracting them with a valued proposal which includes training, career opportunities and a broad range of benefits.



What is the market access situation in Argentina today?

Argentina's healthcare system is a particularly complex action scenario that involves a large number of stakeholders (competitors, distributors, chambers, local authorities, policy makers, patients' organizations, etc.), where new variables and challenges constantly arise.

Argentina has three main medical legs: the private sector, social security and the public sector. The three of them behave in very different ways. Speaking about the private sector the access is good, general wise. We do receive the best treatment available in the world. Lastly, the social security system gives a pretty good coverage and quality as well. PAMI members receive excellent treatments. They have access to almost all the innovative products.

We have an important competitive advantage: highly qualified human resources, both in research and medical practice. State physicians in are extremely well prepared. All of our medical professionals have an outstanding level.

What is the main challenge of Roche Argentina today?

Although this depends a lot on the product portfolio we are looking at, our corporation has today a strong focus on biotech products, an area where in some cases, besides not having the patent protection on these products, Roche doesn't have any competition.

The main challenge for Roche Argentina is to have good regulation in terms of biosimilars. Not for the company itself, but for the final consumer, the patients. Argentina has to make sure that its population receives the best products, quality, efficiency and safety speaking, for the best treatments.



How do you assess the state of R&D in Argentina? How would you rate Roche Argentina's commitment to R&D?

Argentina has been always well respected for its outstanding level of research and development.

It is also well respected when it comes to clinical trials. In terms of R&D, Roche Argentina has strongly focused on this area and one consequence is that our research team has grown considerably on a year basis. We are investing a significant amount of money in clinical trials in Argentina, and we plan to increase the investment in this area. Our country has great potential for clinical trials because of the excellent professional level, patient characteristics, and the fact that research is done with the same quality standards as in Europe or the USA.

Roche Argentina has been recently nominated an independent country for development of clinical trials within Roche worldwide organization. Formally, we were depending on the region and today Argentina is directly reporting to our headquarters in Switzerland. Which is extremely important for the office as from now own we have access to all the possible clinical trials that Roche is performing all around the world. Currently we are investing USD 15 milion per year in clinical trials. In other words, Roche has invested more than USD 70 million in clinical trials in the last five years in Argentina.

If you had the chance to spend five minutes with the Minister of Health what would you tell him on as the general manager of Roche Argentina?

If I put myself in the shoes of the minister of health, the first thing that comes into to my head is what to prioritize first. As we mentioned before, the best access to medicines is as crucial as everywhere else in the world. If you add this to the importance of accommodating innovation as a government priority, it isn't an easy job. We all should help to each other, try to put in place a pharma ecosystem where the pharmaceutical industry, the government and the private sector have they own opinion and responsibilities, but always thinking for the best of the country.

What, according to you, are the pillars on which the company can rely to develop its future successes?

Roche invests heavily in biotechnology and is the world's largest biotechnology company. In Argentina, 80 percent of Roche's revenues come from biotech products and we are hoping to increase this figure. Today, we are extremely happy knowing that Argentina is finally taking the development of the biotech products seriously, as those products have been the main pillar of sustainable growth for Roche in the last five years.

On top of that, as I previously mentioned, oncology and specialized products will be part of our main pillars as well. For instance, over the last years, Roche has developed five oncology treatments that allow patients to reach remission and in other cases live longer with a better quality of life.

Roche Argentina has been ranked a top five company in different magazines as a best place to work in Argentina. What do you think makes Roche Argentina such a great place to work?

Among others, we are a modern pharma company that tries to adapt to the requirements of our employees. We are entering into a phase where four or five different generations will be working in

the same company: there are 60 year-olds working alongside people of 20. We try to adapt our activities to the needs of all of our 450 employees. We have to understand how each segment works and how they can contribute their best to the development of Roche Argentina. At the end of the day, we all want the best for our company. Everyone has to be able to give their best, be motivated and make our company the best place to work. That is why management, starting with myself, is always available for each one of our employees.

How do you expect to see Roche Argentina in the next five years?

Following our Purpose Statement, “Doing now what patients needs next”, we are trying to offer the best possible treatment to all the Argentinians. Our business focus will remain in the pharmaceuticals and diagnosis division. On top of that, we expect not only to be the leaders in oncology: a strong position in CNS and ophthalmology will be a must as well.

After being more than ten years managing Roche Argentina, what would you like to achieve that you have not been able to achieve yet?

My dream would be to discover a young talent that in 15 to 20 years could be part of the executive committee of Roche worldwide coming from Argentina. Once you discovered the person, you have to guide him/her. Always giving them new challenges, but with an opportunity to succeed. Skills will be required from our end and we will have to be able to provide to that person the best career path to never stop learning.

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