

Interview: Eric Thépaut - President Europe, Boston

Scientific



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Boston Scientific is raising the bar for medical devices and services in the field of cardiology and other pathologies, including Rhythm Management, Endoscopy, Urology Pelvic Health, and Neurostimulation. European President Eric Thépaut shares why Europe has been dubbed the company's "growth lab".

Boston Scientific has positioned itself to pave the way for a "new cardiology." How has the pathology evolved, and what advancements have Boston Scientific set forth?

Interventional Cardiology, Peripheral vascular Interventions and Rhythmology make up the core of the cardiology segment at Boston Scientific. The company is inciting change and evolution throughout the market, thanks to a new portfolio of technologies in all therapeutic areas in which Boston Scientific dedicates its expertise. This includes cardiology, but also extends to other specialty areas such as endoscopy with new age visualization systems, and neurostimulation devices treating pain and DBS (Deep Brain Stimulation).

As we strive to provide a new portfolio to the market, we at Boston Scientific remain committed to a culture of innovation. We uphold a particular philosophy that innovation is more than a story of an engineer in his lab, but rather a holistic process working together with many actors in the

medical community. Beginning in the early stages of development, we seek to involve partner physicians in our innovative processes, continuing through to clinical studies and education of the devices that we are preparing to launch onto the market. These partnerships help us to ensure that the products we are developing at Boston Scientific are better than previously available technologies on the market and more affordable to the communities.

What innovations are still to come in the field of cardiology?

Expanding beyond our core portfolio of angioplasty and coronary procedures, we have extended our footprint with a series of products referred to as “Structural Heart.” This is an emerging field including different technologies, such as transcatheter aortic valves, mitral valves, and Left Atrial Appendage Closure (LAAC), all of which are examples of products demonstrating key competitive differences of Boston Scientific. This is a relatively new field, but in terms of market size and potential, it is an important frontier for the company.

The Lotus Valve System, as one example, ensures ease of placement and full control allowing medical specialists to achieve even greater precision during procedures and better patient clinical outcome with less PVL (Paravalvular Leak). The Watchman Left Atrial Appendage Closure device is an example of a new device utilizing high quantities of clinical data that greatly influence the medical practice. The Watchman device is also in process of receiving reimbursement clearing from the French Government.

In the core field where Boston Scientific has already established itself as a key market player, the company offers various differentiated technologies. One of which includes the drug-eluting stent Synergy, a technology that has recently been cleared to receive funding by the French government. These stent devices elude drugs quickly, connected to a polymer that disintegrates shortly following implantation. In our traditional market segment, Boston Scientific is also developing new balloons and new tools furthering our mission to assist the physicians address patients with complex cases. One such tool is the fractional flow reserve (FFR), a device assisting physicians to measure blood pressure in a coronary artery in order to better diagnose treatment.

Boston Scientific will continue to position itself as a market leader in devices targeted towards coronary angioplasty and complex percutaneous coronary intervention (PCI). The company will also continue to extend its portfolio with the engineering ingenuities of “Structural Heart,” including trans-aortic and mitral valves and the Watchman device. We have also invested in R&D, as well as acquisitions to continue company growth, in efforts to provide state-of-the-art devices for patients such as fully resorbable stents.

Following cardiology, what constitutes the next largest segments of Boston Scientific Europe's medical specializations?

Beyond interventional cardiology, Boston Scientific has also established itself as a specialist in the field of rhythmology. In this pathology, Boston Scientific has been one of the first companies in many years to bring innovations to the market, as seen through the new series of defibrillators launched by the company. Defibrillators, in premise, have leads, connected to an "intelligent electronic can" which detects the rhythm of the heart, and in the event of inconsistencies, applies shocks to maintain stability of the heart rate. Naturally, these devices are invasive, and must be inserted and placed within the body.

Our new product in this sector is the Subcutaneous Implantable Cardiac Defibrillator EMBLEM S-ICD System, which, as the name implies, is subcutaneous, imparting a lower infection rate and greater comfort for patients. This device has been a major success for the company, and has helped solidify Boston Scientific's excellence in the field. Miniaturization, less invasive and wireless devices are the focus for the future of this market segment, as well as intelligent devices that do not require any leads connected to the "can" to detect heart rhythms. When working with patient associations, Boston Scientific has also been pleased to share positive news that products are being enhanced for longevity, ensuring that patients for example only need to undergo procedures for device maintenance every eight years or more, rather than every four to five. This is a clear example of how the innovations at Boston Scientific are making a direct impact in the lives of patients.

On the subject of patient relations, Boston Scientific promotes the fact it does not work for communities, but rather with communities. With patient quality of life as a key focus, how has Boston Scientific best incorporated patients into development initiatives and improve patient pathways?

Beyond our products, Boston Scientific is also developing new services and solutions to best address patients' needs. Some of these services include capital financing, performance optimization, and logistical services. We also provide transformational services, dedicated to assisting caretakers with their patient flow. While various competitors seek to acquire new companies and expand into numerous therapy offerings, the strategy at Boston Scientific is quite different. We view ourselves as striving to be a "category leader," capitalizing upon and specializing in very select therapies, to ensure better lives, and save the lives of patients, while also giving to the physicians that provide this care the best affordable tools possible.

Europe today accounts for 21 percent of Boston Scientific's global sales. What aspects have allowed this market to have such an important presence for the company?

Europe is the "growth lab" of the company, and in this context, France not only serves as the site of the European headquarters, but is also the top affiliate. This proves that a company can innovate and be successful in France. In many cases, when compared to the FDA, the regulatory process is shorter in Europe, allowing new technologies to launch in this market first. In this capacity, the European branch of the company truly sets the tone for the rest of the world.

As for the French affiliate in particular, it is important for a company headquarters to be close to its clients customers. In our case, this means the leading healthcare institutions in the field as well as leading actors in the medical community. In the dedicated fields of Boston Scientific, including interventional cardiology, France has a very good reputation globally. Historically speaking, the first coronary stent implant and the first ICD implant were both conducted in France, emphasizing the unique connection of these treatments to the country.

The education system and training facilities in France hold very high standards, and there are many KOLs throughout the country, designating it as an important hub for the region in the pathologies linked to Boston Scientific. In fact, in the north of Paris, in Villepinte, Boston Scientific maintains the Institute for Advancing Science (IAS) as a professional international education platform. This facility represents the company's commitment to education and intensive training as crucial components to maintaining high standards.

France is a large market with a good education system, designating many resources towards research, both public and private. It may be said that market access for innovative ideas may take longer in France, however, I would argue that this is an assurance of quality throughout the system.

This year you are celebrating 20 years with Boston Scientific. What do you enjoy so much of this company's corporate culture?

There is a very dedicated culture to innovation at Boston Scientific, and I have been fascinated by the pioneering ideas at the company. There is also a culture of empowerment and dedication to impact at Boston Scientific, providing me with much autonomy allowing for personal and professional growth. This has instilled in me a sense of motivation, as well as inspired me to motivate my teams.

How do you see the importance of the European business evolve towards the future and what role would you like to see France play in this regard?

Thanks to the strength of our employees at Boston Scientific, as well as our portfolio, continued market growth is definitely something that we anticipate in the near future. We wish to continue developing our training facility, the IAS, in the north of Paris. As a general principle, the more we understand the community that we serve, the more we understand their needs, ultimately allowing us to provide the best tools and services.

Europe is a very strong market for Boston Scientific, primarily thanks to the interconnectedness of a very capable medical community. The community in Europe is highly engaged in research and innovative fields, establishing the capabilities to educate and advance standards not only its own physicians, but also those around the world. Boston Scientific is determined to continue its partnerships with health institutions, internationally and in France, and provide the highest standards for patients.

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