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CEO of the Asia Pacific Medical Technology Association (APACMed), Fredrik Nyberg explains the rationale behind the creation of the first regional medical technology association; the industry challenges ahead, and the critical importance of bringing together all industry stakeholders to effectively advance the development of medical technology across Asia Pacific.

Could you please introduce to our international readers the rationale behind its establishment, as well as the main responsibilities of the association?

APACMed was established in late 2014 as a non-profit trade association with the aim of unifying the medical technology industry across Asia Pacific to raise standards of care for patients in the region. Our founding members are some of the world's largest medical devices, equipment and in vitro diagnostics manufacturers.

The diversity across Asia Pacific, in terms of demographics, disease profiles, healthcare systems, and regulatory regimes presents big challenges. Our aim is to support our member companies in addressing these challenges.

National, country-based industry associations have existed in many part of the region for some time. But until now, there had been no overarching medical technology association covering all of

Asia Pacific, specifically addressing regional issues and challenges.

As an association, we have two equally important responsibilities: firstly, to add value, stay relevant and serve our member organizations. Secondly, to serve our patients and ensure that they have timely access to the most appropriate medical technologies and innovations.

What items are currently at the top of your agenda as CEO?

An immediate priority for us is to engage with, and foster collaboration among all stakeholders in the healthcare sector – from regulators and government policy makers to academics, payers, providers, clinicians and patients – in new, innovative ways, to address and respond effectively to the dynamic challenges facing our region.

As an association of multinational, regional and local medical device manufacturers and associations, we are uniquely positioned to facilitate and lead such initiatives. Examples of initial areas of focus are to drive the adoption of our Code of Ethics; to support convergence in regulatory practices; and to demonstrate the value of innovation.

What is the main strategy that the association is following in Asia Pacific in terms of the medical technology business?

Our mission is simple: we strive to improve the standards of care for patients through innovative collaborations, to jointly shape the future of healthcare in Asia Pacific. It is a patient-centric mission that focuses on collaborating in new, innovative ways with a diverse range of stakeholders within a complex healthcare ecosystem.

We have defined three strategic pillars, which underpin everything we do: *access*, *innovation* and *collaboration*. Firstly, “access” is centred on working closely with regulators and policy makers to develop policies that improve patient access to high quality healthcare.

Secondly, “innovation” aims to promote cost-effective, value-based approaches to healthcare, to ensure product portfolios meet regional needs.

Finally, “collaboration” aims to provide an industry platform for knowledge exchange, to raise awareness, and to meet the demands of the markets in Asia Pacific.

We have also recently identified the need for much greater collaboration among industry stakeholders to build regulatory capacity, to enhance the pace and quality of medical education and to accelerate the adoption of new innovative healthcare delivery models.

Why was APACMed established in Singapore and what is the strategic importance of the region to your members?

It is not a coincidence that we are headquartered in Singapore, as most medical technology MNCs have their Asia Pacific headquarters here. To date, there are over 30 medical technology companies that have set up operations in Singapore to produce medical devices for both regional and global markets. But I should add that we also have members with regional offices in Hong Kong, Shanghai and Tokyo.

Asia Pacific is of major strategic significance to our member companies. Ten or fifteen years ago, the focus was almost exclusively on Japan and China. Today, the region as a whole contributes to 15-20% of global sales for many of our members, and markets such as India, Indonesia and Vietnam are getting much greater attention.

This is also the region of the world that continues to drive overall growth in our sector. Many of our member companies have multiple manufacturing plants and R&D centres in the region.

A recent McKinsey study indicates that the Asia Pacific medical technology market will exceed the EU in size by 2020 to become the world's second largest market after the U.S.

How have regulators across the region responded to the creation of the first regional medical technology association?

Regulators have been very welcoming. To ensure that patients have timely access to new, safe medical technology innovations, industry and regulators must work together. For example, in emerging markets where device regulations are new and evolving, the industry can play a key role in supporting regulatory capacity building and provide training on new technologies.

For compliance reasons, regulators nowadays often prefer to deal with an industry body rather than working on a one-on-one basis with individual companies.

The regulatory environment in the region is complex, and there are several initiatives aimed at regulatory harmonization or convergence. An independent association such as APACMed is well placed to be the voice of the industry and lead a constructive dialogue with regulators on these topics. We are already working actively with organizations such as AHWP (Asian Harmonization Working Party), APEC-RHSC (APEC Regulatory Harmonization Steering Committee) and CIMDR (China International Medical Device Regulatory Forum).

What relationship does APACMed have with the other local associations?

We recognize that some Asia Pacific markets have well established local national medical technology associations. We have no intention of directly competing with these organizations. We share very similar objectives and we believe that collectively, we can achieve more by collaborating on common issues and challenges facing the industry.

In fact, to better align agendas and drive collaboration, we have a separate membership category for industry associations. APACMed's "Industry Association Members" include MTAA in Australia, NATHEALTH in India, Gakeslab in Indonesia, AMMI in Malaysia and BioSingapore and SMF-MTIG in Singapore.

APACMed will typically spearhead pan-Asian regional initiatives and serve as the link with our sister associations in the U.S., Europe and the Middle East as well as with global organizations such as WHO. We are also in a better position to play an active role in regional groupings such as AHWP or APEC-RHSC.

In November 2015, APACMed hosted the first Asia Pacific MedTech Forum, which was met with great success, and surpassed expectations. Can you tell us more?

Our inaugural Asia Pacific MedTech Forum 2015 was the first event of its kind in the region, and while we had initially planned for about 130 participants, we saw over 500 delegates and speakers from around the world, attend the event. This included clinicians and other healthcare professionals, policymakers, regulators, academics and of course senior executives from the medical technology industry.

Participants had the opportunity to network and engage with speakers through a series of panel sessions, CEO roundtables and an Innovation Showcase - demonstrating the industry's latest

breakthroughs.

We are fortunate to have an outstanding Organizing Committee with both a regional and global reach. This allows us to bring together exceptionally high caliber speakers who are able to share insights on critical topics that resonate with the entire industry.

The 2016 edition of the Asia Pacific MedTech Forum was held in Singapore on 8-9 November, under the theme of “Creating New Partnerships in Healthcare”. This second edition, held at Suntec Convention Centre was also a great success, showcasing over speakers across 20 panel discussions, and representatives from 22 countries across the globe. Our hope and expectation is that the Forum will mark the beginning of constructive partnerships that will last for many years to come.

What trends specific to Asia Pacific are driving industry efforts, and how are these developments shaping business strategies?

The megatrends of a rapidly ageing population, a growing middle class, and a rising chronic disease burden are all driving demand for quality healthcare. Addressing this growing demand will require a different kind of innovative thinking on the part of all stakeholders. We will need to collaborate differently to solve our common health care challenges.

In addition, there are other trends that will drive growth and cannot be ignored: expanding universal healthcare coverage; an increase in private healthcare infrastructure; the adoption of digital health technologies to enable alternative delivery models.

Do you believe that emerging markets across Asia Pacific can serve as major innovation catalysts for medical technology companies?

Over time, absolutely. As more global medical technology companies look to serve broader patient segments in emerging markets, it is becoming clear that “de-featured” devices developed in the U.S. or Europe are no longer adequate. Instead, products must be designed to be market-appropriate and developed locally.

Medtech innovation across the region has changed dramatically over the last two decades. Not too long ago, emerging markets such as China or India were solely focused on contract manufacturing and producing low-end, me-too medical device commodities. That is rapidly changing, with a

growing number of local companies developing medtech innovations with a global appeal.

Having enjoyed a successful career with leading companies, what motivated you to start heading up this association?

The opportunity to represent an entire industry *and* be able to build a new organization from scratch were key factors that attracted me to this role. In addition, our region is dynamic and fast growing. The medtech sector continues to innovate and push the boundaries of medical research; in this environment is it easy to stay motivated!

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I am honored and privileged to have been given this opportunity and fortunate to collaborate with a very engaged and supportive Board.

How would you like to grow the association in the next three to five years?

Our industry is incredibly diverse. And therefore as we grow, our membership base must reflect that diversity. We hope to attract member organizations that span across therapy areas and geographies, from the largest MNC's to local Asian innovative pre-revenue start-ups and digital health ventures.

However, growth as a trade association is not only about increasing the number of members, but perhaps more importantly, about staying relevant, adding value and living up to our mission - having a real impact and making a difference to the lives of the patients we serve.

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