Interview: Shane Ryan – Country Lead, Takeda, Ireland



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Shane Ryan, in his first month as Country Lead for Takeda Products Ireland, speaks about his mandate to position Takeda as the leader in IBD and oncology with exciting new product launches, the evolving pharmaceutical and healthcare landscape in Ireland, and the drive to help patients that motivates him every day.

You were appointed Country Lead just over a month ago. What mandate were you given upon your appointment?

In line with Takeda's global journey, Takeda Products Ireland has over the last few years transformed itself from a traditional primary care-driven business into the agile, patient centred, specialty care-focused organization it is today. The transition has not been easy, and we continuously strive to improve our capabilities to realise our ambition to become a leader in specialty care and patient centricity.

Having worked at Takeda for a number of years before being appointed Country Lead, I am now focused on accelerating that transformation, specifically in the areas of inflammatory bowel disease (IBD) and oncology.

One of our goals is also to become one of the top 20 pharma companies in Ireland. Having significantly outgrown the market over the last couple of years, we anticipate this performance will continue over the medium term, so I am confident that we will soon achieve this ambition.

I also want to ensure that we remain an attractive organisation for talent, in order to build the best possible team for the next stage of our evolution.

How challenging has that shift in focus from primary care to specialty care been?

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Admittedly, it is often difficult to move away from established ideas and practices that have served well in the past. But with hindsight, I think we made many astute decisions in terms of how and what we adapted, in line with the needs of our patients and physicians in the evolving healthcare environment.

We were early in recognising the need to adapt in order to remain competitive in our local market and to continue meeting our customers' changing needs. Our key account management strategy is a good example, which involved developing a raft of new capabilities – indeed, a whole new business model. This in turn has given us the operational flexibility to compete more effectively in the two specialty areas we subsequently identified, IBD and oncology.

Can you give us an overview of Takeda's current portfolio in Ireland?

We have a good balance between the established portfolio and our newer specialist products. Historically, we have had a leading presence in diabetes and cardiovascular disease, but with the launch of Entyvio, it also became clear that the unmet patient need in IBD was an important focus at Takeda. Entyvio is a gut-selective biologic for IBD that has been on the Irish market for just over a year.

In oncology-haematology, we have Adcetris, an antibody drug conjugate, making a real difference in relapse/refractory Hodgkin's Lymphoma. We also have Mepact for child, adolescent and young adult Osteosarcoma.

More recently, we were delighted to receive a positive opinion from the EMA CHMP for Ninlaro – a major milestone. We hope to have EMA authorisation by the end of 2016. As Ninlaro will be the first oral proteasome inhibitor in multiple myeloma, it will certainly be a very exciting addition to our portfolio in Ireland.

You mentioned that Takeda's evolution in the past few years was necessitated by the changes in the Irish healthcare landscape. What have been some notable developments?

Ireland’s healthcare landscape has evolved rapidly, particularly in light of the economic crisis of the late 2000s. Since then, there has been increasing pressure to ease the burden of state expenditure, including in the pharmaceutical and healthcare sectors. Against this backdrop the Irish Pharmaceutical Healthcare Association (IPHA)–HSE agreements in 2012 and earlier this year have placed significant downward pressure on the value of our established portfolio. Conversely, these savings will provide financial headroom for the adoption of new and innovative treatments, which is very good news for us at Takeda.

In recent years, the average time between receiving market authorisation for a product to its market launch with a negotiated price and reimbursement is about 18 months – a long time. One of our challenges is therefore to shorten the delay. We will endeavour to do this by working with the payers through generation and provision of real world evidence, effectiveness data, and being open to mutually acceptable solutions to help give patients earlier access to innovative treatments.

The industry as a whole has seen a shift away from established products in areas like upper GI disorders, cardiovascular disease and diabetes to the area of biologics and individualised care. This is driving a capability shift within Takeda, with a greater focus on digital healthcare and the use of digital technologies to improve our effectiveness across virtually every aspect of the organisation. We have so many exciting developments in this field that we’d need another interview to do them justice!

How is Takeda Ireland innovating in response to these exciting developments?

We are very well positioned in Ireland; being reasonably lean, we can be more agile than many of our competitors. In terms of digital, we are committed to learning all the time. My mantra in digital is not to be afraid to fail – to fail fast and to learn from our failure, so we can find a workable solution that brings benefit to our stakeholders. We are improving our capabilities in this respect in many areas, from engagement and education to real world evidence collection. There are so many avenues we could explore in digital that we have to be careful to focus on those in which where we can excel and add the most value.

The whole industry recognises the fundamental need to bring more value to patients and other stakeholders and Takeda is among those who are trying to innovate. However, I do not think anyone has yet been able to provide the complete package of care, which is something we are striving to accomplish in our two specialty areas.

This involves a thorough understanding of every aspect of the patient journey. This is very complex and differs for each patient – especially in oncology – and therefore a difficult challenge. Although

generalising on the basis of this understanding is even more challenging, our success in being seen as a true partner to physicians, patients and society as a whole depends on investing the time, expertise and resources to get this aspect right.

How important is the Irish affiliate to the global operations?

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We like to think we are very important! Ireland is unique in having two manufacturing sites in addition to the commercial presence, so Takeda's footprint in Ireland is very significant. We have a close relationship between all three locations, and the manufacturing teams were very supportive when we set up the commercial affiliate in 2010. There is a strong synergy when it comes to company events, fundraisers and public profile opportunities that benefit both operations.

From a Takeda Products Ireland perspective, it is very useful to have a manufacturing presence. Customers identify with it; they see us as not just supporting patients but also the Irish economy and they recognise Takeda's commitment across several dimensions.

Ireland is also in a unique position because of the vigorous ecosystem of companies with manufacturing or shared services or some other form of strategic operations here.

Furthermore, as a smaller affiliate, I think we bring great value in terms of how we generate and implement ideas. Being small means you can move very quickly to find effective solutions, which can be of great value when fed back to European and global levels.

Takeda also has a very strong company culture, Takeda-ism. How is that manifested in the Irish affiliate?

Having worked for other excellent companies with strong corporate identities, I'm very proud of Takeda's values, which have integrity at the core and remain the fundamental guiding principles for our activities in Ireland. Globally, Takeda has implemented Vision 2025 introducing a number of other pillars that place patients at the centre of what we do. From day one of Takeda in Ireland, we have witnessed a tremendous amount of positive growth but the values have not changed, and that's very reassuring.

Looking forward three years, what are the most fundamental things you would like to accomplish?

In terms of product portfolio and business, we want to establish Entyvio as the top biologic treatment for IBD patients and to successfully launch Ninlaro in multiple myeloma and obtain

market access in a reasonable time frame. Importantly, we also want to be recognised in both therapy areas as true partners.

At Takeda, we have an opportunity to make a huge difference. Both our specialty therapy areas are extremely challenging conditions that are difficult for patients and their carers to endure, so our treatments have the potential to have a major impact on their lives. One third of the Irish population will have some sort of cancer in their lifetime, so being able to provide treatments that can potentially make this difference is tremendously exciting.

The second element is the great team we have here at Takeda, and I’m committed to helping them evolve professionally. We may be small in Ireland but we have ambitious aspirations, which our growth trajectory supports.

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