# Christopher Snook – Country President Singapore & Head of Group Country Management, Novartis



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*Christopher Snook discusses his dual role as Head of Group Country Management as well as Country President for Singapore, highlighting the importance of adhering to in-house as well as country-specific regulatory frameworks and the continued importance of Singapore to the global group.*

**What are some of your main priorities in your capacity as Head of Group Country Management?**

Over the last few years, Novartis has gone through quite a few organizational changes and adjusting to these has been on the top of my priority list. To give an example, we have consolidated a lot of our support function in our Novartis Business Services division. This transition period has lasted for approximately two and a half years and it has been a major focus for many of our offices around the world, not just at our headquarters in Basel.

Secondly, I have dedicated a great deal of my focus to operational priorities which concern business development and growth. Performance with integrity is a key priority, as it relates our strict approach towards compliance particularly with regards to promotional practices. My key responsibility is to ensure that our country presidents and country executive committees around the world understand what local regulatory environments do and do not require from Novartis, how

the local framework compares to Novartis's internal guidelines, policies and processes, and to ensure that their operations meet both internal and external requirements. Ultimately, this means we always default to the more stringent standards.

In this regard, it is important that as an organization, we have to be flexible and agile to adapt to local situations, within the boundary of regulatory frameworks, whether they are in-house or country-specific. That is why we give our country presidents and country executive committees a great deal of independence to implement Novartis' global agenda in-line with their country respective contexts.

**How would you quantify the value interactions at the country executive committee and how might these be further leveraged at an individual country level?**

When I joined Novartis 17 years ago there was no in-country organization that shared information about performance across the different business units present in that country. This means that there was no reference point within the Novartis organization as to how well we were doing either as an organization or as a collection of independent businesses. This has changed significantly to the extent that we now have a much more profound understanding of how we are organized and operate, and how the success of our different units within a given country compare to one another. It is important to get together on a regular basis to compare notes and discuss topics of local importance, as if they impact one division, whether that is positively or negatively, it is likely that they will also impact the other divisions.

Generally, our pharmaceutical oncology business is more broadly represented around the world than our Sandoz and Alcon businesses are. Sharing intelligence on how markets are working to the advantage of the smaller units (Sandoz & Alcon) may be critical in some places and also may open the opportunity for commercial collaboration. In this regard, we are proactively and constantly seeking out opportunities to collaborate across the three different businesses to leverage the strength and presence of one unit to the advantage of the others. This is a program I am heading globally, looking at initiatives that are working successfully in some countries and evaluating how we can implement them in other countries.

**On the topic of R&D – Novartis was one of the first to move into the biomedical hub Biopolis, with the creation of the Novartis Institute for Tropical Diseases (NITD) in 2002.**

**In light of the closure of this facility, how would you assess the success of this 14-year program as it were – and what will be the legacy of the Singapore NITD?**

The Novartis Institute for Tropical Diseases (NITD) was established as a public-private partnership between Novartis and Singapore's Economic Development Board (EDB). In R&D terms, the work of NITD has proven extraordinary. In 12 years, scientists discovered two new antimalarial compounds that are now in clinical development and have the potential to represent a real paradigm shift in the treatment of Malaria. That in itself is impressive by any R&D assessment and we are delighted by the progress we have made there. It is an immense testament to the quality of work and scientific endeavor performed at NITD.

Although the NITD is leaving Singapore, the work does not stop there as we are merely bringing it together with our infectious diseases research units at the Novartis Institute for Biomedical Research in Emeryville California, such that these institutes can support one another. We are very pleased with what we have achieved with NITD in Singapore and it was absolutely an internal organization decision to bring those two units together to strengthen the measure of tropical & infections diseases research.

**With four manufacturing facilities in Singapore, can you give us an overview of the role Singapore plays in Novartis's regional and global supply chains?**

Three manufacturing facilities are currently in production, while the fourth is in the process of validation. Last year, we celebrated the tenth anniversary of our contact lens manufacturing while next year, our tableting facility will reach its tenth anniversary. More recently opened an aseptic filling facility as part of the Alcon group. At the moment, we are building an extraordinary biologics facility in Tuas, which is currently undergoing validation. These facilities reflect a USD 1.2 billion investment – spent or committed – and a workforce of 1200 people, both of which are very significant by any standard.

Furthermore, this manufacturing footprint opens up very interesting opportunities from a talent development point of view, as all four of these facilities are very distinct in terms of the manufacturing environments. This is why we launched an initiative called "Novartis Tech Ops Academy" in Singapore, a program in which we rotate young talents around those four facilities. For people joining us to develop a career in technical operations, we are providing them with a very unique opportunity to gain first-hand experience in four very different manufacturing environments, both in pharma and medical device manufacturing. In terms of attracting talent to

Novartis, we are proud to be able to offer this program which is second to none as a reason to come to Novartis, and move beyond the usual competitive compensation packages.

**Looking forward, what will Singapore mean to Novartis globally?**

Novartis has a very strong focus in Asia and we are right in the heart of the fastest growing region in the world. To adapt to dynamics and challenges in the region it is important that we have a strong presence, ranging from R&D to manufacturing, in the region as well, and Singapore is a very attractive location for us to serve the Asia Pacific region from. We recruit a lot of talent from across the region and we are strongly committed to developing this talent further, with Singapore playing an important role in this regard.

Moreover, we are in active and continuous discussions with the EDB to find new opportunities for mutually beneficial cooperation, particularly in terms of conducting R&D activities in Singapore. We want to develop programs that not only suit Novartis's requirements but also Singapore's ambitions to continue building their attraction as a biopharmaceutical, technological and scientific hub for the region. In many ways, our ambitions are very similar and I think that this is a key factor in what has led to a very strong and cooperative dialogue together with the Singapore government.

**What are your objectives and goals for 2020 for Novartis Singapore?**

Right now, we are expanding our presence in Singapore, putting in new production lines at the Alcon contact lens facility. We expect our new biologics production facility to be operational in 2018, producing drug substances for our worldwide portfolio of biologics.

We will continue to see Singapore in a very strategic context as far as the global Novartis group is concerned. It remains an investor-friendly environment and we have an extremely good relationship with the Singapore government, with the EDB in particular, which we further aim to foster and strengthen.

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