# Interview: Stefano Laganis – General Manager, Baxter RTS Colombia



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11.09.2017

Tags: Colombia, Baxter RTS, Healthcare, Renal, Patient-Centricity, Clinics

*Stefano Laganis, general manager at Baxter RTS Colombia, describes the affiliate's commitment to integrated healthcare services in Colombia and discusses the challenges providers face in the system. Additionally, Stefano highlights his intention to broaden the scope of integrated services available in the country, while projecting on the specialised hospital structure Baxter could set up in a near future.*

**Could you please introduce yourself to our readers?**

I started as a country manager for Baxter RTS Colombia four years ago and have been working for Baxter since 2009. I have a background as a physician with specialisations in hospital administration, finance, and healthcare delivery management.

**Could you please give us an introduction of Baxter RTS's operations in Colombia?**

20 years ago, Baxter saw the opportunity to enter the renal service segment in Colombia, and extend its mission of saving and sustaining lives even further. We are now in a leading position in the Colombian market, with a large network of 50 healthcare facilities around the country and partnerships with 82 hospitals across Colombia. Very quickly the country developed a strong system for renal patients, which resulted in better clinical outcomes compared to other countries in Latin America. Indeed, today we have thousands of lives that depend on the services we provide; and our clinical results compare easily with the ones that can be found in high income countries

and are very competitive compared to other markets. For example, 40 percent of dialysis treatments are performed at home, whereas the figure is usually around 10 percent. In other words, access to this treatment in Colombia is better than in most countries. Our contribution to the country's healthcare system has been very good, especially in remote zones. In addition, RTS is involved permanently in the publication of financial and economic evidence to demonstrate its efficiency.

**How do you feel about the Colombian system? What main challenges have you been facing since you were appointed?**

We can be very proud of the Colombian system today and the improvements we've witnessed these past few years. However, Colombia is facing some challenges, since the country is aiming to providing care to over 97 percent of the population with a restricted amount of resources. I believe RTS has the necessary capabilities to navigate this new trend in the system. RTS will continue to provide solutions to get better results and reduce costs. We're constantly focusing on finding the best way to protect healthcare resources. Our future success will depend on the depth of our understanding of the relationship we have with partners especially hospitals. Undoubtedly, RTS with its integrated care model and risk management program can reduce the costs while improving the quality of care, this is now, and it will be our key factor.

**How do you plan to grow RTS's operations in the country?**

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We intend to provide more services through the same infrastructures under our current integrated model. Eventually, the model could evolve into a network of specialised hospitals achieving more efficient use of resources. Specialised hospitals are an opportunity for us to deliver the highest quality of care to in one facility, reduce our costs through economies of scale and increase knowledge transfer among specialists.

**How can you use RTS clinics to bring innovation to patients?**

Technology supports many of RTS's services to the patient. We've implemented many systems to continuously collect information on the patient's treatment. This decision stemmed from the realisation that the prescription is not the end and clinical outcomes depend on many factors after the prescription. With this system, the doctors can track how well the patient is following his treatment and make the necessary adjustments to ensure the best results.

**Has this patient-centric approach improved your offering?**

While it is true that regulatory, logistical, and financial challenges are important and need to be addressed, they must never surpass the attention drawn to patients. At Baxter, we do not allow this to happen, we are highly focused on the quality of service delivered to the patient. By doing so, we are in a position to ensure that every single service or product that we deliver to patients is useful, and we are on a road to continuous improvement. Designing models really full of patient centricity it's the key factor to solve the quality and cost challenges in the health systems. I think that, more than technology alone, this will be a key differentiator in the future. It is definitely rewarding to see that our company has an impact on Colombia and its people.

**What is Baxter RTS's impact in the primary care segment to the patients in Colombia?**

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I think primary care is very important to the patient and the system as a whole. There is strong evidence that right decisions in primary care have a highly positive impact on the chances for remission of a patient. Indeed, doctors in primary care have a chance of diagnosing the patient at an early stage of the disease, therefore reducing the likelihood of complications. Moreover, early stage treatments are more efficient and shorter than those of later stage diagnostics. Also, well managed primary care clears space in healthcare facilities for other patients, hence reducing the costs and improving access to care in Colombia. I also think prevention is crucial. If well performed, prevention can decrease the rates of illnesses in a country. This means less people would need to attend healthcare facilities in the future, reducing both the demand for healthcare support and financial pressure on the system. While these two components are not high tech intensive, improving their contribution to the system will require a bit of time. Indeed, the government needs to train more physicians, doctors and nurses. Today it is complicated to find programs that seek to change things by prioritizing primary healthcare and prevention.

**Looking to the future, what are your strategic priorities, and what do you want to achieve in the next three years?**

RTS's history in Colombia is living proof of the importance and efficiency of integrated services. We wish to replicate this model to other segments in Colombia through the existing infrastructure we already own. Additionally, we would like to deepen our presence in risk management consulting with our clients. These actions are compatible with the Colombian government's interest in risk sharing between providers and payers. It's important that we move this way because providers receive resources from the government and need to be held accountable for their actions.

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