Interview: Dorota Hryniewiecka-Firlej – President, Pfizer Poland



"We are working to ensure market access to our newest breast cancer treatments, that are not accessible to Polish patients."

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Dorota Hryniewiecka-Firlej, president of Pfizer Poland, discusses the current state of the Polish innovation landscape and importance of a tight-knit relationship between the innovative pharmaceutical market and the government for better patient outcomes. Furthermore, she highlights the strong R&D footprint of Pfizer Poland and their role in facilitating a domestic scientific breakthrough, as the most significant market for Pfizer in the region.

You are not only the president of Pfizer Poland, but also the president of the Employers Association of the Innovative Pharmaceutical Companies (INFARMA). What have been your key achievements over the last two years?

The last few years have been a reflective period for myself, as I have encountered many new experiences and situations for the first time in my career. During this time, as the president of INFARMA, it was critical to construct the correct strategy for the association, as our 26 members all have differing interests and points of view. Moreover, it is important we are aligned with the same synergic and harmonious approach. This movement was built based on our successful collaborations and active listening between the different key stakeholders; therefore, allowing our members to have a stronger voice in the Polish healthcare ecosystem.

In fact, if you look at the Polish healthcare landscape, the market access of innovative treatments is growing as new initiatives are being put in place by the government, with the objective of

improving prophylaxis and treatment for Polish patients. This entire process has allowed me to mature professionally as I take an active role in managing these discussions and ensure INFARMA is a true partner in the process.

From a Pfizer Poland perspective, as an extremely innovative partner of Polish patients, we must take advantage of the market opportunities as they present themselves.

What is the footprint of Pfizer in Poland?

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In January 2018, Pfizer will celebrate 60 years in Poland, a great achievement for the company. Ten-years ago Pfizer Poland conducted a study to understand how we were perceived in the market. Results showed that we were viewed as a young, arrogant woman that does not take into consideration the consequences of our decisions.

We needed to shift this perception, and create an atmosphere of a mature woman, who is fully aware of the outcomes of each task, and we have tirelessly worked with the healthcare community and key stakeholders to drive this vision.

It is important to underline, that this movement is not only a campaign, but Pfizer Poland truly carries out a patient centric business model that puts patients first in each decision we make, and throughout every department.

What are the growth drivers for Pfizer Poland?

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Pfizer Poland entails two core pillars: essential medicines and innovative treatments. Essential medicines were formerly innovative therapies that bring excellent value to patients and the entire healthcare ecosystem, while in the meantime creating budget space for the market entry of innovative products.

The second pillar, innovative treatments, is a strong focus for us and is a sector that continues to grow, making up around 50 percent of our business. We are driven to communicate closely with key stakeholders the importance of better and quicker market access of innovation. We do this by utilizing the tools given to us by the external environment and Pfizer Poland is not afraid to challenge the status quo and be a leader in this innovative movement.

How would you describe the current innovative landscape in Poland?

It is extremely promising! We are not limiting our thinking and activities, and are using tools, such as risk sharing agreements, to adapt to the external environment and reimbursement regulations. In fact, in the last two years there has been a huge openness from the Ministry of Health (MOH) to discuss solutions with the entire Polish pharmaceutical industry, so in the end innovation can obtain market access easier and faster.

Now, it is our job to clearly state the value of our innovative products, and clearly show the positive impact it will have on patients. Moreover, we must continue to build on the strong partnership between INFARMA, MOH and Ministry of Economic development; therefore, we constantly are meeting to not only find solutions for our current concerns, but be pro-active in developing short and long-term strategies for the future.

This includes concepts such as improving overall healthcare and pharmaceutical spending and identifying correctly specific patient groups to ensure the neediest individuals can receive innovative therapies. Nevertheless, it is about incremental steps, being more of an evolution, rather than a revolution.

What areas do you envision Pfizer Poland will take advantage of as innovation is valued to a greater extent?

Our priority, and an area we already have experienced good results, is in oncology. We are working to ensure market access to our newest breast cancer treatments, that are not accessible to Polish patients. Nevertheless, the 21st century allows patients to easily obtains information on these therapies, and a huge amount of Poles have enquired about our breakthrough breast cancer treatments, as well as other innovative products. Very encouraging!

One way to bring innovation to the people is through clinical trials. What are the R&D operations of Pfizer Poland?

Pfizer globally invests roughly 8 billion USD into R&D, and Pfizer Poland has a great footprint in clinical studies, conducting trials in oncology, neuroscience and pain management. Poland is great place to conduct such research due to the overall high quality of clinical operations and abundance of world-class physicians. The Pfizer Poland team is constantly demonstrating the potential of Poland to headquarters, and we hope that in the future we can build on this already significant clinical impact.

One of your key initiatives is to develop innovative molecules out of Poland. What are the advancements on this front?

For the last 12 months we have been driving forward this campaign. Pfizer Poland itself does not have expertise in this area, though Pfizer globally has five Centers for therapeutic innovation (CTI); an open innovation model that helps bring scientific ideas to fruition. This involves Pfizer Poland collaborating with universities and sending molecules to these CTI´s to asses the potential for further development. We are knocking on the door, and want to be a key player in seeing true innovation coming out of Poland.

What is the strategic importance of Pfizer Poland for the company in the region?

In the region, we are the number one market and equally one of the fastest growing. We bring confidence to Pfizer as we are delivering exactly what we promise, while in the meantime strengthening out partnerships throughout the healthcare sector.

Overall, we have put Pfizer Poland on the company map, and I am constantly communicating with headquarters, and now they truly understand the amazing potential of the Polish market. Pfizer Poland is a team that embraces diversity, be it in either gender, sexuality, age, race and nationality, and this helps us adapt and be effective in every situation. All in all, we are a mature and stable affiliate that is a predictable place for Pfizer to safely invest.

What are your aspirations for Pfizer Poland moving forward?

Commercially, we want to grow our economic impact, while expanding our clinical study capabilities and build a relationship between Poland and the company´s CTI centers in the US. Hopefully, we will be able to announce in the near future that Pfizer has been part of a scientific breakthrough coming out of Poland.

My time as a medical doctor allowed me to witness the true extent of sick patients, and our objective is to generate positive health outcomes, so they can live improved lives. Overall, Pfizer Poland aims to be perceived as a company that delivers true innovation, and is a predictable partner for all the key stakeholders: the government, medical community and most importantly, the patients.

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