

Interview: Filipe Novais - General Manager, Astellas Portugal



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Filipe Novais leads the Portuguese affiliate for Astellas during an exciting time for the company globally. With a new global CEO, Astellas is aiming to be at the forefront of healthcare changes to turn innovative science into value for patients. Novais has a lot on his plate both to achieve sustainable growth by pursuing innovative science and leveraging this across a variety of therapeutic areas with medical solutions that provide value for patients in Portugal.

What were your priorities when you took on the role two years ago?

There were three priorities: a) Make Astellas medicines available to patients; b) Develop a strongly motivated and committed team of 50 employees and c) Lead a financially healthy affiliate.

Regarding the availability of Astellas medicines, we closed the pre-evaluation contract with Infarmed in 2016 making our main oncology medicine available to the Portuguese patients. We have not achieved reimbursement in all key medicines but we continue to pursue that goal.

I have the honor of leading an affiliate with many talented and committed people! We are organized in a variety of working groups that enable best practice sharing and different opinions. Each therapeutic area has a working and decision-making group made of colleagues from different departments like Medical, Commercial, Finance, Market Access and compliance. We call these working groups the Brand Pyramids.

Despite the size of the market in Portugal, the affiliate has to make the right decisions to keep our financial key performance indicators healthy. This way we will achieve a sustainable growth and bring innovative science to the Portuguese patients.

How is Astellas Portugal performance shaping up?

Astellas Portugal has a healthy financial performance. We are achieving the goals agreed with headquarters.

Our performance comparing to the rest of the market is also positive. Due to the launch of innovative medicines in the last years, we are growing as the number of patients benefiting from Astellas medicines is increasing.

What is top of your to-do list for 2018?

We have an exciting portfolio to promote. There is relevant scientific data to disseminate and a number of projects to implement that are patient focused. We have to maximize the value of the current portfolio.

Assure reimbursement of our main oncology product is on top of our priorities.

Additionally we will increase our activity regarding the launch of new products. Astellas has an innovative pipeline of medicines that will come to market over the next two years.

What is the secret to fast market access in Portugal?

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The Portuguese economy is still recovering from the financial crisis of 2011. Country financials are improving but there is still a long way to go.

The allocated budget to reimburse medicines is still lower than majority of developed countries.

In Astellas, we aim to achieve our Vision of turning innovative science into value for patients. We focus on delivering outcomes that matter to patients, which are broader than the efficacy and safety of a product.

When it comes to the cost of providing those outcomes, we not only look at the payment incurred by the patients, payers and governments, but also the indirect cost and burdens to a broader set of stakeholders like the patients families and care givers. We have to understand the needs of our healthcare stakeholders and enhance our ability to prioritize activities around those products or

services that most effectively and efficiently meet the needs of patients.

How do you position Astellas in this environment?

This is our first contribution: to deliver value for patients. With a sense of urgency and patient focus, we must continue maximizing the value of our products in the most efficient manner possible.

What is Astellas's clinical trials footprint?

We have ongoing clinical trials in Portugal for our pipeline promising medicines.

Portugal has great potential to attract more clinical trials, although there is room to improve.

Clinical trials are a core activity of pharmaceutical companies. Benefiting firstly the patients that get access to innovative healthcare solutions earlier.

There are also benefits for the healthcare professionals that raise their scientific knowledge. Financially speaking, this benefits the diverse economic activities needed to conduct the clinical trials.

How do Portuguese and Japanese work ethics merge?

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The Japanese work ethic is characterized as being long-term loyalty and commitment. Often employees stay for a lifetime in an organization but they will rotate and move across different roles within the organization. Japanese and Portuguese people are welcoming and encourage the multicultural society that we see here today in Portugal. Further, the Portuguese population is eager for innovation, and as part of the European Union, and given our size and expertise in science, we are an attractive testing ground and a safe environment for new practices and innovation.

What do you do to attract and retain the best talent?

We have been noted as one of the best places to work in Portugal for successive years, and we prioritize employee engagement. We measure this through surveys and are delighted to receive feedback from our employees.

We have 55 employees in Portugal, majority of opportunities are international positions. Astellas has policies in place enabling working for international roles based in Portugal. We have a high rate

of talent retention at the same time we consistently seek new talents and strive to make a balance between company culture and new colleagues. Both must challenge the status quo.

Pharmaceutical Industry reputation is increasing for the right reasons and the new generations are curious about this highly innovative sector.

What is your final message to our international readers?

We work towards our mission of launching new products that succeed and reach the people who most need it. In Astellas Portugal we work as a team to continue our positive financial trend and delivering innovation to patients.

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