

Chris Fox - General Manager, Amgen UK & Ireland



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Christine (Chris) Fox, VP and general manager UK and Ireland at Amgen, two months into her first country manager position and first time in a role outside of North America, discusses the creation of new, innovative partnership models with stakeholders across the healthcare spectrum, how Amgen is leveraging its biologic manufacturing expertise to move into biosimilars, and the importance of the UK's exceptional science and talent base.

What were your perceptions of the UK market before coming here and how have these perceptions evolved when facing the reality on the ground?

Everyone tells you how complicated the UK market is and that is true - it's one of the reasons I took the job. There is a lot of complexity, layers, established norms but it's also evolving at the same time. There is a deep public pride in the NHS, which is sometimes undermined by this complexity, but the political nature of healthcare is something you find in all markets - it just plays out slightly differently.

Where do you see the strengths and weaknesses of the British healthcare environment?

The rules of the game are better established in the UK in terms of demonstrating value. It is not *always* just about price in the UK - it hasn't been for a long time and there are other value-based

considerations around medicines uptake. This is actually a strength of the system that we can now start to have conversations around pathways, partnerships, the practicalities of getting medicines to patients, and solving more systemic problems to help get patients the care they need.

What drove you to accept this role in the UK, in what are challenging times as Brexit looms on the horizon?

In short, the challenging nature of the situation is exactly why I took on this role! As an affiliate, we have a great reputation internally within Amgen for innovating, partnering and collaborating – and now I’ve seen it for myself and I’m excited to lead the team in taking that to a whole new level. I am learning a lot and we have a great caliber of talent here. I’m looking forward to building on their perspective in a health system that I don’t know as intimately. I also look forward to using my experiences to develop talent, so we will all be learning together.

Why does Amgen favor these partnership models so strongly?

We look at our partnership models very pragmatically; ultimately ours is a shared agenda with the NHS – we both want patients to receive the best possible care in the most cost-effective manner. We understand better than anyone how our medicines hold the potential to help get us there, but there’s plenty that our customers know better than us. Once you find that shared mission it’s much easier to work through, together, whatever problem you’ve got on the table: whether it’s a pathway issue, patient identification challenge or technology barrier.

What is the importance of your region – the UK and Ireland – to Amgen within Europe and globally?

The UK is a reference country and the robustness of NICE’s appraisal methodology – increasingly putting value at the centre of decision-making – will continue to play a key role in the UK’s strategic importance for Amgen. In some ways we’re also a bit of a microcosm of the rest of the world, in terms of our ageing population and a health ecosystem that is changing and evolving. Our global HQ understands the significance of the market, the talent we have here in both commercial, corporate functions and R&D, and the fact that it is a place where we want to effect change.

What is the significance of Amgen's R&D footprint in the UK?

We've got a 300-strong R&D team in the UK, which coordinates clinical trials in Europe that account for over 60 percent of the company's trials. This work plays a significant role in advancing our innovation and securing European approvals for our medicines.

Many of our UK R&D team hold global and international roles and contribute to Amgen's global R&D strategy. I know that Amgen has always recognized the value of the UK in providing access to world class science talent and now that I've had a chance to work alongside them, I can see why. It's great having so much knowledge right here on our doorstep, and I think it'll make us a better affiliate team being closer to the science.

How is Amgen performing today in the British market and what priorities have been set?

Our foundation here is strong. I inherited a solid business and a great existing team. We have opportunities to drive innovation and partner with the NHS in a different way. We are also looking for ways to work with the NHS and other specific subject matter experts to help us better understand how to use technology to enable earlier diagnosis and treatment, more targeted interventions and how we have that discussion at a local level.

How is Amgen's portfolio represented in the UK today? Where do you see most growth coming from currently, and what are your expectations for the future?

We have a broad UK portfolio which includes established products, recent launches in cardiovascular disease for instance, and a new platform of biosimilars which is a hugely exciting area for us. We are expecting seven Irish launches in the next year so we're looking forward to getting out there to meet the demand. With our biosimilars we are seeing a different way of working with the NHS; the tender process deviates from standard reimbursement schedules so it's a learning curve, but we know the door is open and uptake may not be as big a barrier. The potential cost savings speak for themselves, as well as the robustness of other differentiators that companies like Amgen can provide.

What are the challenges of managing both the UK and Ireland and do you foresee these markets being kept together post-Brexit?

Ireland used to be where the UK is now – market access was slow, but there was an openness to doing business and companies could eventually bring innovative products to market. In the last couple of years, that has vastly changed, but Ireland is now coming out of that period. What makes managing our joint affiliate work from an Amgen perspective is the cross-functional teamwork and the fact that the same portfolio is represented in both markets, although Ireland is in a different stage of its journey. The spirit we have in Ireland is also very translatable and there is a healthy competition between the two teams!

Amgen's pipeline is strongly genetic-focused, with 75 percent of its pre-clinical and clinical projects having genetic support. As the UK is held up as a pioneer in genetic research, what future role do you see for the country in this field and how can Amgen leverage this?

Amgen at large has a great appetite for this and for deepening our understanding of human genomics. One of the leading indicators of this was Amgen's acquisition of the Icelandic company deCODE Genetics in 2012. This company was rooted in the ability to understand and analyze the human genome and now we're looking at the practical applications of that in medicine. Not only does it give us an opportunity to look at scientific discovery in a new way, but it affords our company a greater opportunity to decide where – and where not – to invest.

On a personal level, having spent a significant part of your career with Takeda, how does Amgen compare and what do you enjoy most about working at Amgen?

All the companies I have worked for have had their own culture. Takeda has 200 years of Japanese heritage, whereas Amgen is a comparatively new company. What makes Amgen special – although it sounds somewhat trite – is the science and the commitment to science. Our mission from day one has been to serve patients with serious illness and you can see that in everything we do. Our leadership team understands that the entire healthcare ecosystem is changing rapidly and that we need to be part of the solution through learning and acquiring new capabilities. We cannot just make great medicines, sit back, and wait – that alone is not enough. This is especially applicable in countries like the UK where you can try new things and learn what works best for the rest of the

world.

How would you characterize the level of talent at Amgen UK and the company culture you are building?

The talent in Amgen UK is extraordinary. When I joined this team, I learned what they wanted to accomplish. Their goals are ultimately my goals. Our commercial foundation is strong and because many of them have come up in the UK and only ever worked in the UK, their passion for driving change and innovation was palpable. They have been open minded about trying new things. They have also been committed to enhancing our culture. We already had a strong culture in terms of accountability and pride, but they are now hoping to create more of a learning culture – learning quicker and being more adaptable, not just for their career at Amgen but in life. That is a wonderful sign of leadership and people owning their contribution to the business and putting their thumbprint on it.

As a new member of the ABPI board, what are your first impressions?

It is striking how competent and capable that team of leaders is. In the next five years there is going to be a seismic change and the people in that room are going to be at the forefront of driving that change. The board's discussion with the health system is always rooted in compromise and trusting each other, building a better bridge and understanding that we are solving things for the greater population. Of all the experiences that I have had outside of the Amgen walls, being part of this board has been the most inspirational.

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