

Catherine Lee - General Manager and Managing Director, West Pharmaceutical Services China



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Catherine Lee, general manager and managing director of West Pharmaceutical Services China, shares the highlights of her 2.5 years heading West's China affiliate; West's commitment to delivering their global scientific leadership and technical solutions to the Chinese market; how West simplifies the journey with their new Integrated Solutions program to deliver more value to their clients; and the role of West Pharmaceutical Services China as a strategic growth engine for the global organization.

Catherine, prior to joining West Pharmaceutical Services (West) in China in 2016, you were working in various roles across Alere Inc. (now Abbott), GSK and also the Shanghai municipal government. What made you decide to join West, which is a more niche service provider for the healthcare industries?

I feel very honoured to have had the opportunity to join West, the global industry leader in the design and production of advanced, high-quality integrated containment and delivery systems for injectable medicines.

To share a little about West, we were founded in 1923. This means that we have a track record of nearly a century of working by our clients' side, serving global leaders within the pharma, biotech and medtech industries. As early as World War II, we partnered with drug manufacturers to design

and supply ways of safely delivering penicillin to wounded soldiers on the battlefields, for instance. As a company, West has delivered huge contributions to patients and society, and I am very proud to be part of this organization.

In addition, West also prides itself on maintaining the highest quality standards, and this was another reason for my decision to join this company. West's commitment to ensuring that all our products and solutions meet international standards and regulations, and reach our customers in a timely manner, also appealed to me. I strongly believe that by joining West, I could make a difference to the lives of patients in China and globally.

What has been your strategy as MD China over the past few years?

West is really the global industry leader in the containment and delivery of injectable medicines so our mission in China is to bring our scientific leadership, rich experience and technical solutions to meet market needs here.

Looking at the industry in China, driven by the government's national strategy to improve and develop the pharmaceutical and medical industries, as well as to encourage more innovations to enter the Chinese market, we see many opportunities for us to bring our expertise here. For instance, the mentality that China is still a generics market today is very outdated. Looking at our portfolio mix and our operations, we can see that the biotech boom in China is really driving demand for new solutions. There are many new biotech companies being established, and even the more conventional Chinese pharma enterprises are establishing biopharma portfolios, so our business in this area has increased dramatically. We expect to see this trend continue in the future.

Our mission to deliver innovations and leverage advanced product technology and scientific leadership to serve industry needs in China also meets the government's own vision of delivering their Healthy China 2030 strategy. With China being the second-largest healthcare market in the world, West looks forward to leveraging our global learnings and experiences here. With the introduction of generics quality consistency evaluation (GQCE), as an example, since we have a long history of working with multinationals across different sectors, we believe we are able to advise our clients on how to best meet these new requirements from a packaging standpoint.

What differentiates West as the partner of choice within the Chinese industry?

Firstly, we have undisputed scientific leadership and technical expertise within the industry from our global organization. We have proven ourselves to be a trusted partner to the world's top pharma and biotech companies.

Secondly, I would like to highlight our robust quality management systems (QMS), which guarantees the consistency, quality and effectiveness of our products across international markets.

Thirdly, we truly work by the side of our customers as a true partner, advisor and even consultant. For instance, we are able to support our clients from a very early stage in their R&D and pipeline development. Even though we produce packaging and delivery systems, our products interact with and have direct contact with our clients' drugs and active components, so we are conscious that we play a very important role in ensuring the safe and effective delivery of our clients' products to patients.

Another common perception is that China is a very cost-conscious market. Particularly from a service provider standpoint, how does West, as a global player and an industry leader, manage cost pressures from your clients?

Our focus is on delivering value to drug companies. I think this is the top priority for us and for our clients. The government is looking at reducing healthcare costs for patients but without sacrificing high quality standards. Our clients want the best technology solutions for their products. I believe all stakeholders understand the critical importance of quality and safety.

With our focus on value, we have launched our new Integrated Solutions program to align our services, solutions and support with packaging, containment and delivery products for every molecule at any stage for our clients. We also focus more on the innovations that we can bring to our clients such as our wearable, smart-dose products. In addition, as a global industry leader, we can share our international expertise and experience with other countries' regulations with our clients, particularly those looking to export their products to other markets. This is something that differentiates us further.

West also has a manufacturing presence in China. Could you share more about this?

We have two manufacturing facilities in Shanghai, within the Qingpu Industrial Zone, with over 250 employees. These are ISO 9001 certified facilities producing our TrimTec® and InsoCap® closures for IV delivery.

Our people prioritize quality and safety as our core values. We remind our employees that what we manufacture truly matters to patients' lives. Some of these patients could even be our family members or friends, which makes their work truly very personal and meaningful.

Our current injury rate stands at 0.82, which is very low. Globally, and in China, we are now striving to reduce that to zero.

With the boom in China's pharma industry, HR is a challenge for many companies. How does West manage the talent crunch and promote talent retention?

As a niche service provider, we are looking for a broader range of talent because our employees need to have some knowledge of various pharma, medtech and biotech industries. Our talent pool may, therefore, be larger, in that sense. In addition, we also provide significant learning opportunities and talent development programs for our employees, whether experienced executives or newer recruits. These cover a range of topics and skillsets from quality management, product portfolio to industry knowledge.

In addition, West really emphasizes corporate social responsibility and there is a sense of community within the organization. Through global initiatives like West Without Borders and local initiatives like fundraisers and food drives, we foster a caring corporate culture. This is also attractive to our employees.

Ultimately, at West, we stress the values of teamwork and communication. We understand that while we do not manufacture medicines, we ensure the safe and effective delivery of important life-saving medicines to patients. This is a very meaningful job.

In China, both our commercial and manufacturing teams work very closely with each other, our customers, industry associations and government authorities to support patient needs.

What is the strategic importance of the China market to West globally?

China is already the second-largest healthcare market globally and we have seen many encouraging policies from the Chinese government, including the Marketing Authorization Holdership (MAH) initiative, China's ICH membership, the publication of the Orange Paper and so on. West globally certainly views now as a good opportunity to leverage on global resources and support to grow our operations here.

For West APAC, we have achieved double-digit growth in the past few years, partly driven by China's growth. We certainly play a very active role as a strategic growth engine for the global organization, and we are confident that we will continue to contribute to the growth and development of China's healthcare industries.

Looking ahead, what is your vision for West China over the next few years?

Our key strategy for West's business in China remains, firstly, to continuously bring high-value products to the industry here; secondly, focus on innovation and total solutions; thirdly, maintain scientific leadership and leverage our global strengths and resources here; and finally, improve the overall capabilities of the team to better serve our customers.

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