

# Amy Van Buskirk - General Manager, Roche Sweden

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*Amy Van Buskirk, general manager of Roche Sweden, discusses the role Roche plays in the Swedish healthcare system, how Sweden is becoming an innovation leader once more as well as a frontrunner in precision medicine, and explains how Roche wants to build strategic partnerships and form lasting relationships in order to strengthen this innovative ecosystem.*

**This is your first time outside of the US heading a country affiliate of Roche, what have been your strategic priorities since taking over the affiliate as General Manager last August?**

Firstly, we are an affiliate deeply invested in both supporting and furthering the broader Swedish healthcare landscape by providing equal access to medicines, while also making advancements on how we expedite access to medicines in Sweden, in partnership with the wider community. Secondly, it has been fantastic for me to join an affiliate that shares both a strong viewpoint but also a strong network within the Swedish healthcare system. Finally, we wish to continue furthering our goals and aspirations for serving the broader community whilst helping to ensure it can be accomplished as quickly as possible and in a sustainable way.

**Moreover, how have you adapted to the very different healthcare landscape compared to the US?**

Understanding the key differences between the two systems has been a learning experience for me. A major inspiration for me has been the commitment to equality within the Swedish healthcare system. Healthcare is a right in Sweden whereas in the United States it is not. Personally, this is something I am very passionate about and it inspires me to think about how we can serve as many people as possible, because every single person has a fundamental right to healthcare. So, this has been an opportunity for me to learn about a system that is working to meet those goals and aspirations.

**Globally, key growth drivers in 2018 have been the strong launches of new medicines Ocrevus, Tecentriq, Alecensa, and Perjeta. Is this innovation drive reflected in Sweden as well?**

Innovation is absolutely a driver of both the broader organizational landscape as well as our performance here in Sweden. Observing the commitment of the Swedish healthcare system in supporting us to bring innovative medicines to people here in Sweden and thinking about how to go about this in a fashion that is not always traditional is exciting. For example, we are working to bring our FoundationOne CDx genetic testing tool into Sweden by partnering with the reimbursement authority, to review and report on how best to achieve this. There are great opportunities on innovations with our medicines but also in data science and genetic testing where I believe Sweden is at the forefront.

**When we met with Anders Ekblom, Former CEO of AstraZeneca Sweden, he regretted the fact that the adoption of new therapies is not fast enough in Sweden because of the fragmented healthcare system. How have you navigated this regionalized healthcare landscape?**

Equal access to care is an important and ambitious goal. There is a dichotomy in Sweden between the broader national perspective coupled with local implementation. This comes with considerable benefits because it attends to a local population and ecosystem but there are challenges as well. These challenges include the complexity of applying innovation quickly within each of the 21 regions. The current system at times includes redundancies that can slow access to innovation.

There is an opportunity for all stakeholders to partner around how to rapidly bring meaningful innovation to every Swedish patient in a sustainable manner.

**Roche is the global leader in oncology. Given that Sweden is the country with the highest 5-year relative survival rates for all cancers in the EU, do you feel that there is an appetite from the authorities to welcome in these new innovative oncological therapies?**

Sweden is on the cutting edge when it comes to thinking of creative ways to better understand how we can advance innovation for cancer patients. Patients are surviving longer, and they are progressing from cancer being an acute situation to cancer being a chronic condition. This creates new challenges for patients and the broader health care ecosystem but also generates new opportunities to consider how we can support these patients in having the longest and fullest lives possible. One of the areas I find truly inspiring is the passion that oncologists have in Sweden to think creatively, beyond traditional studies or pathways, about how to implement precision medicine by combining multiple agents or thinking about new ways of treatment. Sweden is advancing the infrastructure and the data science perspective to unlock these new opportunities for Swedish patients.

**Sweden is sitting on a treasure trove of health data thanks to its unique national registries and biobanks. How can Roche leverage these assets?**

This data presents a huge opportunity and there is a strong desire within the ecosystem to find ways of making this data available, while also leveraging the data in order to further our understanding of diseases and the value medicines provide. This will enhance the way in which we think about the long-term impacts of these diseases, the underlying cause with genetics and the ability to integrate massive sets of data. There is a tremendous opportunity to figure out how we can unlock this potential while, at the same time, protecting individual rights and patient privacy. Sweden is unique in that we have at our fingertips a collection of rich data sets and a relatively small population; therefore every individual should have the ability to connect based on their personal identity numbers. This access to information and data portability also has the potential to increase patient empowerment. This will require a policy perspective but also integrated funding support within the ecosystem in order to further the value of this data and to serve individuals here in Sweden.

**Roche is one of the most innovative companies in the world. But innovation is not only about what is discovered in the labs, it is also about the way you run your operations locally. What are some of your projects that make Roche Sweden a truly innovative organization?**

We are focused on working closely with the healthcare ecosystem to uncover the unmet needs in Sweden and are working in partnership with thought leaders in the field to uncover what the key scientific questions are. These areas revolve around clinical studies, some of which were recently presented at the American Society of Clinical Oncology (ASCO). We are also partnering with reimbursement agencies centered around piloting innovative approaches in order to accelerate access to innovative medicines. Currently we have a pilot on combination therapy and we have partnered with EUnetHTA in bringing two of our medicines far more quickly to patients. As an organization we are working on partnering with the genetics side of industry in order to advance precision medicine and accelerate the introduction of this capability so patients can have access to the right medicine at the right time.

**It is coming up to a year that you have been General Manager for Roche Sweden, what are you excited to accomplish in the coming year?**

I am passionate about continuing to further our goals and unlock opportunities within precision medicine. As I mentioned earlier, we have many innovative collaborations in the healthcare landscape to further the science. Sweden has the data, the top tier institutions and the patients who are both accessible but who also have access to care. So, the question is, how we take all of the ingredients and bring them together in order to unlock the opportunities we have. In addition to this, I am excited both here in Roche but also within the LIF board to collaborate in keeping Sweden as a leader of innovation and furthermore, to find ways of partnering with the broader ecosystem to create sustainability in the wider landscape.

**What skills have you personally developed since heading the affiliate that you feel will be able to leverage for the rest of your career?**

As I mentioned previously, it is exciting to be in a place that is committed to both healthcare as a right for the individual and a culture that is passionate about innovation. When we can align on a

set of common goals and common priorities it makes partnership, collaboration and the overall mission clearer. As a leader it is important not to push your personal agenda but to work towards a common goal and I see that every day here in Sweden. The system works on behalf of this broader mission and purpose, which is powerful and has the opportunity to drive lasting change. I find this inspiring and also a learning opportunity to think about how as leaders we can take a long-term view, align toward a common mission and co-create with stakeholders to deliver of our collective ambition.

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