Mahender Nayak – Head, India, CIS, Middle East, Turkey & Africa, Takeda



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With nearly 240 years of history behind it, Takeda continues to position itself as a leading global R&D-driven biopharmaceutical organization. Dr Mahender Nayak, recently appointed area head of India, the CIS countries, Middle East, Turkey, and Africa (ICMEA), explains the company's strategic presence in the region and outlines his strategy to continue growing by staying loyal to Takeda's values.

Could you begin by introducing yourself and your journey with Takeda?

I have been at Takeda for the past nine years and have had the opportunity to experience different roles. I started in the Asia Pacific region, moved to Global in Zurich for a couple of years, and went back to manage Takeda in Korea for three years – it was a fantastic opportunity. Subsequently, I was fortunate to be part of the Shire portfolio integration process in the leadership team of what we call Growth and Emerging Markets (GEM), that encompasses geographies across Russia, Brazil, China, South Andean Mexico, Asia Pacific and ICMEA. The integration not only brought together the strong portfolio of the two organizations but also combined the talent pool of the two legacies as one. It was a matter of months when the position of area head at ICMEA came up; I was fortunate to be considered for the role. Things happen very fast at Takeda; it is an agile company.

What have been your priorities and goals after taking on the position of area head of ICMEA?

Takeda has been on a path of transformation since 2014 and the acquisition of Shire just accelerated that process. 2019 was an exceptional year, bringing people of both organizations together as One Takeda, and we completed the integration in record time; if you look at other big integrations in the industry and compare them to what Takeda has achieved, we have certainly raised the bar. Now that the integration process is over, the focus is very much on strong cross-functional collaboration and execution excellence. My priorities are patients, people, and portfolio. ICMEA is an integral part of our global vision 2025, centred around serving the needs of our patients, wherever they are, earning trust with our customers and society through our values, and to be recognized as best-in-class because of our agility and innovation.

Growth and Emerging Markets account for 13 percent of Takeda's global revenue. Being in charge of a large share of those markets, how do you see that number evolving?

The intent is in the name itself, and it is about delivering sustainable growth in our markets and investing in the growth of our people across the diverse emerging markets' region. Now operating as One Takeda, we continue to execute on our business priorities to drive long-term growth in the region. In parallel, our R&D engine continues to advance highly innovative medicines that make a critical difference to the lives of patients. There is ample opportunity in ICMEA. We can make a meaningful difference to patients' lives as we continue our efforts to partner and contribute to the development of policies, improving the standard of care, and enabling access through our commercial activities and commitments around our approaches to access to medicines across rare diseases, oncology, neuroscience, and gastroenterology.

Talking about the markets in the ICMEA region, how do you advance the 'One Takeda' model to fit every country, especially given the differences in populations and healthcare systems?

It is a good question because ICMEA is an extremely diverse region. Here you will find the oldest civilizations, such as Egypt or India, and some of the youngest, like the UAE. There is also a big contrast in populations, India having over 1.2 billion people and Bahrain with less than two million. GDP per capita also presents big differences as we have some of the poorest countries and some of

the richest. I believe that understanding the diversity of ICMEA is a big challenge, but it also presents a huge opportunity. With 16 different nationalities represented by our Leadership Team in 2020, 44 percent of whom are women, this opportunity is very clear to us.

The values of the company are our vehicle to success in any market. Takeda-ism is about integrity, fairness, honesty, and perseverance, and it is the behaviour that we expect from every employee anywhere in the world. What binds us together is the order of our priorities in patients, trust, reputation, and finally business; It is not just something that we have hung the wall, it is a mindset that we bring to our meetings. It’s our unique checklist that guides us in making the right decision every time. We first assess if a decision will be good for the patients, then we talk about how it might impact the trust that society has on us, then whether it would reinforce our reputation and, if it clears all three conditions, we move ahead with the business opportunity.

What are the main opportunities in terms of portfolio and revenue for the ICMEA region?

Takeda is an R&D driven, bio-pharmaceutical leader. For over 200 years, we have focused on bringing better health and a brighter future to patients worldwide by translating science into life-changing medicines that make a critical difference for patients. We have earned our place among the top 10 innovators and we are confident in our ability to execute in our near-term and sustained growth opportunities. Our exciting pipeline has 12 new molecules in wave one through 2024, which represent several potential best-in-class / first-in-class therapies in our four core therapeutic areas for R&D: rare diseases, oncology, neuroscience, and gastroenterology. We also make targeted R&D investments in plasma-derived therapies and vaccines. Our currently marketed 14 global growth brands present a great window of opportunity for ICMEA. We have numerous launches planned over the next few years. As you can see, there is great potential with our existing portfolio, and we have enjoyed successful launches that have generated double-digit growth. We are very confident about our continued success in the region.

With over 40 product launches expected in your region over the next couple of years, how will Takeda build enough capacity to ensure the company accomplishes this?

The enablers are capability building and cross-functional team working. To get the launches right, we must have people working together cross-functionally but also have adequate capability to deal

with innovative specialty products. As One Takeda, we have the right people to manage it. If you go back and look at the company's portfolio in the past, it was driven by primary care. The past few years have seen us transition into specialtycare. We have set up a strong launch excellence mechanism that has been operational for the past year. The success of recent launches is proof that we are moving in the right direction.

In terms of the UAE in particular, what do you think are the main strengths of the country as a regional hub for the pharmaceutical industry?

One of the main strengths of the country is the talent pool available. I have come here from Singapore, a similar global hub, where the diversity and levels of talent available are impressive; I already see it here. The most recent Global Study of Engagement Technical Report produced by the ADP Research Institute shows that the UAE has the most committed workforce in the world. The UAE has always welcomed talents from different regions and has always been open to ideas from different people across the world. Also, when we look at Takeda specifically, since it entered the top ten global pharmaceutical companies last year, we have been able to attract the best talent.

This year, the UAE will also host Expo 2020. Two themes central to the Expo are Innovation and Sustainability, which are also central to Takeda's strategy. In addition to our innovative pipeline and R&D, we have featured within the Global Top 100 Most Sustainable Corporations index for the fifth year running.

Takeda has become part of a select group of only 14 companies to receive global Top Employer status for 2019. What does it mean to you, and why do you think the company achieved this status?

Being named Global Top Employer for three consecutive years is a testimony to our aspiration to create an exceptional people experience in every country where we operate. It is important that every colleague at Takeda can fulfill their potential while helping to create a brighter future for millions of patients worldwide. In ICMEA in particular, the Top Employer certification went for the third time running to Takeda entities in Turkey, Ukraine, and South Africa. In addition, UAE, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and Kazakhstan were all certified for the first time this year.

We focus on empowering people to shine in their roles. We are a global, progressive company that has a bright future because of our values as well as our pipeline. We place a great deal of attention

on retaining talent. For example, we have a program that allows managers to have quality conversations with employees that go beyond performance. I have that conversation with my boss regularly and look forward to having it with the ICMEA team as well.

What makes you passionate about this industry, considering you have spent more than two decades in it?

I am a physician, and I know firsthand that this industry can have a huge impact. Still, I think I can have a greater personal impact being area head, particularly in such a diverse and dynamic region, as long as we understand the needs of the patients. I am very excited about making the right choices, keeping our values, putting patients at the center, and making sure that we provide the access of our innovative medicines to patients across the ICMEA region.

What is the vision you have for Takeda in the region in the next five years?

Our global vision is about providing access to our highly innovative medicines to patients wherever they are. Also, there are markets where patients are not able to afford their treatments, so there is access to medicine strategies to help them. We will continue to earn the trust of our customers and society through our values, and we aim to be recognized as best-in-class because of our agility and innovation. This summarizes Takeda’s Vision 2025.

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