Kostas Deligiannis – General Manager Eastern Europe, GE Healthcare



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Kostas Deligiannis, general manager Eastern Europe for GE Healthcare (GEHC), outlines GE Healthcare's commitment to the 20-country region under his remit, his priorities for greater collaboration between these countries, and how GE Healthcare's innovations continue to set the bar high for both long term cost savings and improvements to patients' quality of life of patients.

Kostas, since the establishment of this new position as general manager, Eastern Europe in October 2018, what priorities did you put in place to continue building the awareness and success of GE Healthcare in the region?

It is a very interesting time for healthcare globally, because its defining parameters are changing. This is even more evident in Eastern Europe. Our countries continue to evolve their infrastructure and healthcare must be reintroduced and repositioned in this evolution. They are looking to modernize their institutions, mainly from a cost perspective, but also from an optimization and education perspective. So far, the results have been immense.

In parallel, there are big differences between each country within this region. Eastern Europe spans across 20 different countries, covering the Baltics, excluding Estonia, Central Eastern Europe, and the Balkans. Each of these markets have individual dynamics and characteristics. We have made a strategic decision as GE Healthcare, to continue and strengthen investments in this region. The

same can be said for the Czech Republic, where we are putting more attention, new skilled partners and resources into the market. From January 1st, 2020, Stargen EU is our strategic commercial partner representing the company's capital imaging equipment. Knowing how difficult it is to find partners whose vision and quality standards match those of GE, we are very fortunate to have this new partnership in the country.

Localizing our approach, we are growing our capabilities to work together, through collaborations and partnerships, with all key stakeholders, either public or private, elevating healthcare and facing the main challenges such as cost, accessibility, and accuracy of diagnosis, just to highlight a few. This goes hand in hand with introducing new solutions to these markets. GE has traditionally been a company of innovation, dating back to when the company was founded by Thomas Edison. We have globally valuable experience in healthcare, and we would like to bring this in Eastern Europe. For all these countries, it is a "competitive advantage" to have a company like GE working in their proximity or "back yard".

On the other hand, there are around 1500 people working for GEHC in Eastern Europe, with varying skills and talents. My main priority is to merge these unique sets of experiences from different countries and bring everyone together on the same page, so that every problem can be addressed by the people or team in the region with the relevant experience. For example, the team in Greece has a lot of experience dealing with EU structural funding in Healthcare since decades. Now, Eastern Europe is receiving more and more funding from the EU for Healthcare, so this experience is helping us in the other markets to anticipate the use of these additional funds and create new ideas on how to designate relevant projects. Generally speaking, GEHC has the experience, the will and the ability to help countries, governments, healthcare institutes and private operators to attract and take advantage of untapped external financing opportunities.

What are some of your key milestones or achievements that you would like to highlight during this time?

One and a half year is not a big timeline, but I am proud to say that in 2019, our first full year of operation, we managed to increase our market share in a galloping market. It is evident that our solutions are being welcomed and our contribution is appreciated.

This contribution is multidimensional. We are very excited to announce that later this year, we will open our new Educational Center in Romania. This will serve the whole of Eastern Europe. The Center aims at training doctors, operators, physicians and all those who work with our products; it

is important that they use in the best way the new technologies that we are bringing to the market. Although some may see Romania as not the most obvious choice for an Educational hub, it is fantastic to see how much the country has been developing and at such an incredible pace. Still, the situation for Healthcare personnel is more challenging in the country, so we would also have bigger participation from them, as needed.

Saying that, all countries in this region are facing a shortage of well-educated doctors. There is a “brain-drain” effect and many have left to practice in Western Europe. This can also be said for Greece, a country which has the most doctors per million inhabitants; the best ones are still leaving. We have discussed in length with medical associations of how we can help. By introducing efficient and innovative technologies coupled with state-of-the-art training and education solutions, we offer to doctors an appealing reason to remain working in their home countries despite the challenging environment.

What solutions are you looking to bring to the region, and specifically the Czech Republic?

GEHC is revolutionizing globally the Healthcare ecosystem in terms of quality, cost, patient experience. In Healthcare, the Czech Republic is known for adapting the best technological solutions that exist, so many possible solutions can be adopted here.

Let me give you an example. The country is a good case when it comes to the implementation of oncology solutions, particularly in breast cancer. Recently, the European Coordination Committee of the Radiological, Electromedical and Healthcare IT Industry (COCIR) conducted a relevant study on five countries within Europe, and the Czech Republic was one of them. The study showed that, by adopting a rigorous breast screening program, in 15 years Czechia brought down the mortality rate from 43 percent to 29 percent. This is outstanding and one has also to think that the cost of treatment from Stage One to Stage Four breast cancer increases rapidly, almost doubles. You understand the implications of utilizing novel Imaging Technologies (that sometimes are considered as “expensive”) not just for saving lives, but also for tackling the cost problems of the Healthcare system.

In this frame, a new solution GEHC introduced is the “One Stop Clinic” for breast cancer. Currently, there are many different techniques for diagnosis, but most of them require a few days for analysis before the patient receives feedback, incurring unnecessary worry and discomfort for them. To counter this issue, we introduced this Clinic in collaboration with the Gustave Roussy Cancer

Campus in Paris. Here, all possible diagnostic paths are fully available and the patient journey is organized by a multidisciplinary team in such a way that each patient has in the same day of her visit a complete digital study of their breast, a diagnosis, and a treatment plan if necessary. This approach does not require a vast amount of capital, it is rather a matter of bringing all the clinical aspects together. But the positive impact for the patients is huge.

Not only does GE Healthcare offer imaging devices and tools, but also digital services with the aim to become a part of a "digital ecosystem". How are you creating a digital ecosystem in the region?

Artificial Intelligence (AI) and digital tools are the future, and GEHC works heavily in this area. For example, in the area of MRI scanning, AI is heavily employed in our AIR™ Recon DL and Air x™ technologies. These advanced techniques create more accurate diagnostically images and make it easier and faster to conduct the exam. This means saving time for the doctors, but also facilitating the patient by eliminating repetitive scans and the associated discomfort. What is also unique in this case, is that the system uses each exam it conducts for deep learning purposes, i.e. it learns how to conduct the exam even better the next time. In a sense the machine keeps evolving and, in a way,, it is not the same as it was at the start of its life.

Another key area of digital technologies is our Command Centre for hospitals. Currently, the patients' journey through a hospital, from the moment they arrive, the different stages of treatment, to when they leave is quite unpredictable. Hospitals are somewhat "blind", and no one has an overall picture of the real time situation. Until now hospital administrators were reacting to a problem when it occurred, rather than preparing for it, simply because they had no other option. An answer to this fragmentation and complexity is the Command Center that GEHC started to introduce in major hospitals globally. It is the collocation in the same physical space of all key decision making and operational hospital staff coupled with 21st century decision making digital tools. Every decision on admissions, staffing, surgeries scheduling, bed management, discharges etc. is rapidly taken, monitoring the situation and anticipating needs in the following hours, based on an increasing volume of operational statistics and data. Hospitals can reduce costs, multiple their efficiency, and most importantly keep the patients satisfied as to not be feel treated as a burden.

This is a revolution in managing and running a hospital. There is a multi-month study and implementation phase through which a tailored for each hospital or network of hospitals solution is

defined and optimized. Not every country in the region is ready for this system overhaul, but I believe the Czech Republic is a country that has the potential. It has a proven record of adapting to new technologies and is ready to close the gap on Western Europe. At the end of the day, if the world's healthcare systems do not adapt, they will not have a future nor will they be able to offer patients a treatment of the quality that is expected.

What final message would you like to send to our international audience?

Ambition is the defining ingredient of success. In GEHC we want to work together with partners and customers that have ambitions: be it introduction of pioneering methods, patients' well – being, institutional efficiency in productivity and cost or even financial results. Every such Healthcare stakeholder with ambitions will find in GEHC a powerful and reliable partner.

On a more personal note, what keeps you motivated?

Internally, my team, the one I work with, is my best motivation. Surrounding yourself with smart people who work to improve each other is important. Externally, seeing the mark of our work in the real world and how we are contributing to the patients' lives is a great motivator.

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