Şeyda Atadan Memiş – General Manager, Takeda Turkey



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Takeda's general manager for Turkey, Şeyda Atadan Memiş, reflects on the Japanese giant's ambitions in Turkey at a pivotal moment when the Shire integration has been completed. Atadan discusses how the organization has seized on Takeda's revamped portfolio, focusing on rare diseases, haematology, immunology, gastroenterology, and oncology, to move up the ranking and become a top eight company among multinationals. In addition, the Turkish executive talks about Takeda-ism and the goal of bringing better health for a brighter future.

Can you start by introducing your career in the pharma industry after spending time with a prominent Turkish company, Shire and later Takeda?

I am a chemical engineer with an MBA. I started my professional carrier in the pharmaceutical industry 19 years ago in Turkey with Eczacıbaşı Baxter. I worked there until 2015 with growing responsibilities in sales and marketing across multiple business units, ranging from medical devices to commodity and specialty products. With the global Baxter-Baxalta spinoff in 2015, followed by the Baxalta-Shire acquisition in 2016, a rather exciting part of my career began.

During the spinoff and acquisition, I was fortunate to have more critical leadership roles. I worked on the corporate culture, managing the organizational changes, strengthening the company reputation towards a specialty care leader, and engaging with all our stakeholders.

The dynamism brought by the success in the transitions came with new opportunities. By the time I was appointed as the Interim General Manager of Shire in 2018, I was actually running three roles in parallel; one was “Hematology Business Unit Director”, I was also the interim Business Operations Head and I was responsible for the regional (the former EAMEA region) launch of one of our products.

These integrations not only provided me with valuable skills operations-wise but also taught me how to be more resilient during disruptive and extensive changes while forming a corporate culture.

Finally, following the announcement of the global acquisition of Shire by Takeda, I was appointed as general manager of Shire during the transition and later general manager for Takeda in Turkey in 2019.

I was also really intrigued by the opportunity to join a company at a transformative moment. By the time the Shire acquisition was announced, Takeda was not a new company in Turkey: the foundation dated back to 2009 and the company was originally focused mainly on primary care. Starting from 2014, we had launches in oncology and gastroenterology areas. The integration of Shire has accelerated Takeda’s shift to a leading global R&D-driven biopharmaceutical organization with a very strong pipeline focused on innovative medicines.

How is Takeda’s top 10 global position reflected in the Turkish affiliate in terms of revenues, portfolio and capabilities?

I would like to begin by saying that 2019 was an exceptional year globally, bringing people of both organizations together under “One Takeda”. Thanks to our strong 240 years of heritage, values, and corporate philosophy, we transformed into “One Takeda” and “One Culture” quickly as a team of almost 200 colleagues.

We have also built a bold aspiration when we started our journey as one Takeda. In 2019 we were consolidated as the 19th largest pharmaceutical company in Turkey. Our aspiration was to move from this 19th position and be amongst the top 10 pharma companies in Turkey in five years via launching 9 new innovative medicines.

This somewhat ambitious goal inspired us to launch 6 new medicines in just 2 years. We completed 4 of these launches in 2020 despite it being the year of COVID-19. Through the significant effort of our team, we moved 8 notches to emerge in the 8th position amongst the multinationals in Turkey

while experiencing the divesture of our primary care portfolio.

With these results, I can proudly say that the integration process is over. Our focus nowadays is very much around serving the needs of our patients, strengthening our trust of our customers and society through our values. We want to be recognized as the best in class with our agility, innovation, and cross-functional collaboration.

How has Takeda's portfolio changed in Turkey after the Shire acquisition and how does your launch strategy look like for this market?

From a global perspective, we have a very exciting pipeline of 12 new molecules, and we anticipate up to six new molecular entity regulatory submissions in 2021 with the potential for global approval. In Turkey, we are confident of the portfolio and want to bring innovative therapies to patients as soon as possible. After the Shire acquisition and subsequent divestures, our portfolio is focused on rare diseases, haematology, immunology, gastroenterology, and oncology. We will continue to serve the patients' needs in these areas thanks to our new approvals for rare genetic disorders such as Hunter's syndrome, Gaucher disease and lung cancer.

Our upcoming launches are centred around immunology, mainly primary immunodeficiency, haemophilia A and B, and prevention for hereditary angioedema attacks. With this pace, we will strengthen our position in Turkey and maintain a sustainable business that goes in line with our vision and values.

What is your take on Turkey's current socioeconomic situation, its impact on the healthcare system and the role that Takeda must play?

Speaking about the economy, Turkey is among the top 20 economies by GDP per capita; it has been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, but it is expected to bounce back. The pharma market is evolving because of the increased prevalence of diseases and has grown by double digits in the last two years, and it is expected to continue growing by double digits, becoming the world's 16^{th} largest market. With increase life expectancy, rapid urbanization and increase of purchasing power, the fundamentals are there.

As Takeda, we believe that Turkey has a strong and well-functioning healthcare infrastructure, our reimbursement system and the universal health insurance coverage provides accessible quality

healthcare services for nearly all our citizens.

The objective now should be to implement policies in areas like rare diseases so that we can expedite access to innovative medicines for diseases with high unmet medical needs. As an R&D driven organization, Takeda is determined to tap into this to foster innovation; we believe that having a specific rare disease policy in Turkey will also positively impact this environment.

This can also help to increase the investment of the pharma industry in the country. Turkey has the potential to generate investment in clinical trials via developing an innovative medicines pipeline. With around 521 clinical trials in 2019, Turkey ranked 26th globally, a relatively low position considering the size of the healthcare market, the economy, the harmonization of legislation with the European Union and the strong academic ecosystem.

We are currently running 15 clinical trials in oncology, haematology, genetic diseases, and immunology.

You have mentioned your work to maintain your business during the pandemic. Can you share with us the experience and how you managed to collaborate with different stakeholders?

Takeda’s innovative medicines addressing the unmet patient’s needs and its global access approach played a huge role. The company has always been working with the motto of “Better Health, Brighter Future” for all patients around the world. Through that corporate philosophy, we have put enormous effort and responsibility to expand access in all geographies. Our innovative portfolio is addressing unmet needs which helps improving patients’ lives.

How did we manage to serve our patients during the pandemic? I could talk about it for hours because it has been a critical year where we worked nonstop to not only ensure uninterrupted access to our therapies but also to expand our portfolio, adding new products to continue improving patient lives during these unprecedented times. We knew that the worse impact of the pandemic has been on patients because they are facing multiple challenges related to their diseases and had to deal with lockdowns and less access to healthcare services on top of that. As a company feeling deeply responsible for the society where we live, we strived to serve the evolving needs of the society, contribute to the overall environment, and support our patients.

I would like to highlight one ongoing study done by Rare Diseases Europe (EURORDIS) which has analyzed rare diseases patients’ experience during the pandemic. The study found that there have

been many delays in surgeries for more than half of those patients. Nine out of ten patients faced interruptions of the care they receive for their rare disease.

Considering all these facts, hearing the voice of our key stakeholders like the healthcare professionals and also being a patient-centric company, our response to the pandemic began with focusing more on the needs of the patients; we felt responsible for patient groups and wanted to ensure that they had seamless product delivery despite the many logistical barriers. We also worked on the continuity of our patient support programs and ensured seamless interactions with healthcare professionals through digital channels and methods. Finally, in cooperation with the AİFD trade association and the Ministry of Health, we supported the medical supplies and other needs of healthcare professionals via a donation campaign.

In order to succeed during the pandemic, you must have had strong digital capabilities. How advanced is Takeda’s digital strategy?

Globally, Takeda believes that data is one of the most strategic and valuable assets. The company had partnered with Amazon, Accenture and MIT to create new possibilities using the power of data.

It inspired us to see what we could do at a local level to unleash the power of data. I can proudly share that we created channel systems to engage with health care professionals (HCPs) and increase disease awareness for patients. We have also used artificial intelligence-enabled systems to improve HCP engagement and our own internal processes. COVID-19 created an opportunity to accelerate the development of our digital capabilities.

How challenging is it to attract and retain talent in a company that has undergone such a significant transformation in the past few years?

We are placing a lot of effort on the agility piece, investing in the capability development of our teams to enable better launches and succeed together. Exporting our talent has proven to be very effective because they can learn from other countries and markets; we have exported 11 employees to global positions in the last three years to places like the United States, Switzerland, CIS countries, Ireland or Germany. Takeda is great at identifying talent and creating opportunities for them.

Talking about retaining talent, company culture certainly plays an important role which is particularly important at Takeda. What is your approach to Takeda-ism?

This year we are celebrating Takeda's 240th anniversary and we are proud of its history. What began as a temporary startup established by Chobei Takeda in 1781 has become a top ten global R&D-driven biopharma leader. We are able to attract the best talent because they know that there is an opportunity to contribute to the rich history of the company. While Napoleon was being crowned emperor of France in 1804, Chobei II was increasing the scale of Takeda.

When we talk about Takeda-ism, what has been constant through these 24 decades has been the mission of bringing better health for a brighter future. Our founder used to tell employees to work with integrity and deal with medicines as if the patients being treated were your own children. That is the universal value system of Takeda that remains unchanged; Takeda-ism is composed by integrity, fairness, honesty, and perseverance. Our code of conduct is not something we hang up in the wall, it is a mindset that we bring to meetings every day. We first assess if a decision benefits the patient, then determine the impact on the trust that society has on us, next whether that decision will reinforce our reputation and finally if it helps us to develop our business.

What are the things that healthcare stakeholders in Turkey should be working together to ensure that the system is sustainable for everyone?

Our role as an industry should be to continue raising awareness, working closely with the authorities, non-governmental organizations, patient groups, healthcare practitioners because everyone has a shared responsibility. We should also continue our work with the trade associations because they are putting a smart plan in place, a plan that resonates well with us since it is aimed at helping the authority create an innovative ecosystem that attracts more investment, increases employment and brings the latest technologic advances in medicine to Turkish patients.

Is there a final message you would like to convey to our international audience?

Takeda has undergone a strong transformation and I believe that this transformation made us agile and resilient, our successes and sustainable growth is evidence of this strong transformation.

I sincerely believe that Takeda, which aims to achieve sustainable, profitable growth by providing patients access to innovative treatments in Turkey will continue to provide more value for our

patients, people and planet and positively impact the lives of more patients with life-changing treatments.

At Takeda Turkey, we're committed to creating an exceptional people experience. For the fourth consecutive year globally and fifth consecutive year in Turkey, the Top Employer Institute has named Takeda a "Top Employer". Our people are the cornerstone of our success, and we recognize that creating diverse, inclusive, and equitable work environments are critical to building a healthy company culture that empowers our employees to live our purpose every day.

While creating this exceptional people experience, we also try to welcome diverse talents and include multiple perspectives. We also pay special attention to diversity and inclusion since there is ample evidence that diverse and inclusive companies are more likely to make better, bolder decisions.

We are also focused on creating an environment that fosters lifelong learning and a growth mindset, enabling employees to grow and thrive.

And last but not the least, as Takeda Turkey, we are confident in our outlook for the future and believe our strengths will continue to drive us as a purpose-led and sustainable company for many years in Turkey.

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