

Marco Lee - Vice-President & General Manager, APAC, Avanos Medical



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Marco Lee, APAC head for medical device firm Avanos explains how the company's products are catered to patient needs in the region and talks through key growth drivers, the impact of COVID-19, and the talent development strategy he has put in place.

Could you begin by introducing yourself?

I've worked in the medical industry for most of my life. My previous experience included biomedical engineering, healthcare solutions, orthopaedics and wound management, and now two-and-a-half years with Avanos Medical. These roles have increased my awareness for the importance of medical devices and technology, and the assistance they provide patients for their treatment and recovery.

What are your current priorities at Avanos?

Our priorities are building up the organization to deliver good solutions for patients within the region; creating brand awareness of Avanos in the medtech community; and delivering results for the company. Personally, my goal is to contribute to society in a positive manner. I'm confident that we can better serve patients utilizing our strengths as an organization.

How is Avanos' portfolio adapted to the diverse APAC region and the needs of patients there?

The COVID-19 pandemic has led to improved insight into respiratory health and assisted in the growth of Avanos and its medical devices. For example, products such as closed-suction catheters to assist in intubating patients and the continued use of ventilators, protect both physicians and patients from cross-infection.

The diverse mix of economies within the APAC region comes with a range of different needs depending on the level of development. For example, economies such as Singapore and Japan are highly developed, while China and India are still developing and therefore have different requirements.

Therefore, Avanos caters to the growing needs of patients through its differentiated product lines in Respiratory Health, Digestive Health and Pain Management. Strategic product launches in targeted markets, looking at the treatment spectrum, physician's adoption, and payee and payor models helps us provide timely solutions to patients. Specifically, Avanos is delivering solutions to the growing middle class in APAC that are demanding better healthcare and services.

What countries are you managing within APAC?

At present, I manage Japan, Australia, New Zealand, China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, South Korea, India and the Southeast Asia region in general.

We use Singapore as the regional headquarters in APAC due to the infrastructure, accessibility, and the ease of doing business in the country to assist in our operations locally and in other countries in the region. There is also an abundance of talent in Singapore, which supports our progression and further expansion in Asia-Pacific.

Is respiratory health currently the main driver for growth in the business?

While there is growth across all areas of focus for Avanos in APAC, respiratory health is certainly one of the key drivers during this period of pandemic. The increasing demand for respiratory health, digestive health, and pain management treatments (for acute and chronic pain) is due to

the rapidly growing elderly population within the region.

Additionally, social lifestyle changes for our patients – such as greater involvement and engagement in sport and exercise – are increasing demand in better health practices and pain management treatment, particularly with the pandemic preventing many other leisure activities and travel.

How did you mitigate the impact of COVID-19 at Avanos?

The impact of COVID-19 social distancing measures by hospitals, as well as government messaging in each country, has forced us to reach our customers and physicians virtually and digitally.

We are using webinar technologies to conduct dialogue sessions and trainings to educate physicians. These instructional videos can be revisited at any stage for a step-by-step process of certain specific procedures, in lieu of in-person training sessions.

Furthermore, online engagement through Microsoft Teams, Zoom and other meeting technologies is helping to close the gaps we have with physicians due to social distancing measures.

However, we are looking forward to resuming in-person activities and trainings for a more substantial touchpoint and for discussions that are not entirely replaceable virtually. We believe the training is more beneficial in-person compared to the digital platform trainings, although given the current situation, this is the best we can do to engage and educate both physicians and consumers.

How do you view the role of Avanos in APAC?

APAC is a region of untapped potential and is primed for medical device companies such as Avanos to work together with local physicians, associations, and institutions to provide higher quality services and solutions for patients in the region.

Not all areas in APAC are able to access or receive the requisite level of care, therefore our goal is to treat the region equally and improve the availability of our products to all patients and countries.

Is Avanos APAC on the lookout for M&A opportunities or other forms of collaborations with start-ups in the region?

We are constantly on the lookout for interesting opportunities for the business. This is not limited to just acquisitions; we are also open to partnering with start-ups or other companies with innovative ideas or solutions that complement our business. This ongoing process is presented to our corporate development team to evaluate the suitability of these products to Avanos depending on the size of the company and its current situation.

Is there potential for greater regulatory harmonisation in the APAC region?

There is potential for greater harmonisation in the region, especially regarding regulation and market access. Several countries are beginning to harmonise registrations and standards that can be widely used across the Southeast Asia region. Additionally, medical societies, associations and companies are all advocating for greater harmonisation in APAC. However, this process will take time due to the fragmentation of the region both in respect to the state of the economies and cultural differences.

What culture and talent developments are being built at Avanos APAC?

Avanos APAC aims to create a workplace for diverse cultures and backgrounds to positively function together. Additionally, we nurture this diverse and inclusive workforce to establish the company as a destination for talented, innovative and creative minds from around the globe to grow the company. Furthermore, the ability to address problems from different angles based on an individual's background will help the company make the best decisions moving forward.

Regarding growing talent within the business, we offer international assignment projects to talented individuals within Avanos. These projects allow selected employees to work with their counterparts in other regions of the world to investigate problems together, deliver best practice solutions and showcase themselves to other members of the company.

What do you want to achieve for the business in the next few years?

The goal over the coming years is to build up the brand equity and the profile of Avanos in the Asia-Pacific region. This will help the company attract more talent and open up access to more

APAC countries for the opportunity to deliver our solutions. As a company, we're looking to attract, retain and grow talent to continue reaching all corners of Asia-Pacific, and to provide all patients the best medical solutions and level of care.

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