Okan Güner – Country Manager Turkey, Viatris



In Turkey NCDs account for 89 percent of all deaths with nearly one in five occurring in people under the age of 70-years

28.10.2021

Tags: Turkey, Viatris, Mylan, Pfizer, Generics, Biosimilars, Strategy, Manufacturing

Okan Güner of Viatris Turkey introduces the company's sizeable footprint in the country, including local manufacturing and explains the challenges of executing an integration of two companies during the COVID-19 pandemic. Güner outlines Viatris' role within Turkey's Vision 2023, the opportunities for their biosimilars pipeline, and their portfolio's role in the fight against non-communicable diseases, which account for 89 percent of all deaths in the country

.

Can you end by giving us a brief overview of your career in the pharma industry and the circumstances that led you to Viatris?

I have a background in chemical engineering, having graduated from Boğaziçi University, and hold an MBA from Penn State University.

My professional career began at Borusan and joined Pfizer in 2003 where I spent nearly two decades growing through the ranks and performed different functions such as finance, purchasing, sales and marketing. I had the privilege of managing the Europe Alliance Markets (Switzerland, Austria, Czech Republic, Romania and Slovakia) as Lead and General Manager of Turkey and Russia for Upjohn, which was a Pfizer division. In November 2020, upon the formation of Viatris, I joined the new company as country manager for Turkey.

Viatris has been formed globally in November 2020 as a result of the combination between Pfizer's Upjohn and Mylan. Can you introduce the company and what differentiates it?

Viatris was formed with an overarching purpose – to create a new kind of healthcare company which mission is to empower people worldwide to live healthier at every stage of life, regardless of geography or circumstance. Although we are a relatively new company, formed amid the pandemic, our collective journey has started with a deep commitment to corporate responsibility with sustainable access to high-quality medicines fundamental to our operating model and mission.

Our global operating platform has significant scale, with operations across all geographies around the world. We employ more than 40,000 colleagues and benefit from an 11,000-person frontline team, enabling us to provide better access for patients and customers in more than 165 countries and territories. Although we are a global company, we take a local approach, with a deep understanding of how best to serve our patients and customers. With our best-in-class manufacturing, dedication to product safety and quality, scientific expertise, regulatory and commercial capabilities, we are able to remove barriers to access across the entire spectrum of health, from prevention to treatment, serving as a partner of choice for companies working to connect more patients to products around the world, through what we call our Global Healthcare Gateway.

Powered by our best-in-class manufacturing, scientific and legal expertise and proven commercial capabilities with unparalleled reach, the Global Healthcare Gateway paves the path for those looking to expand access to more products and services.

Improving everyone's ability to gain access to sustainable and high-quality healthcare is our relentless pursuit. We remain steadfast in our efforts to enable and empower people around the world to improve their health by ensuring high-quality treatments get in the hands of those who need them the most.

What is the company's footprint in Turkey? What are your manufacturing capabilities and how do they fit the overall global strategy?

Viatris' unique global platform comprises more than 40 manufacturing sites globally across oral solid doses, injectables, complex dosage forms and active pharmaceutical ingredients capable of

producing more than 80 billion doses annually.

In Turkey, Viatris has a strong footprint with more than 500 employees and a state-of-the-art oral solid dose (OSD) manufacturing site that produces high-quality medicines for cardiology, urology, pain and CNS, catering to local and global markets.

We also recognize that human and environmental health are interlinked, so we work systematically to advance sustainable operations and reduce our environmental impact. This means we focus globally on environmentally responsible conduct as we systematically and diligently work to minimize our environmental footprint. Our comprehensive approach focuses on managing our water use, air emissions, waste, climate change and energy impact.

The team in Turkey has undertaken important actions in the use of renewable energy and reducing carbon emissions. We look forward to advancing our work and supporting the global path towards science-based targets.

We are committed to Turkey and will continue to have a growing role in strengthening the pharmaceutical industry in line with the government’s vision, which classifies the pharmaceutical industry as a strategic sector for Turkish Vision 2023.

Non-communicable diseases (NCDs) continue to be the leading cause of death and disability worldwide. How is Viatris contributing to the fight against NCDs in Turkey?

NCDs remain the leading cause of death globally. In Turkey NCDs account for 89 percent of all deaths with nearly one in five occurring in people under the age of 70-years. With our global portfolio which comprises more than 1,400 molecules across a wide range of major therapeutic areas, we are working towards addressing these unmet needs. From cardiovascular health to oncology, we offer quality treatment options across more than 10 major therapeutic areas covering a wide variety of noncommunicable and infectious diseases.

The company also offers beyond the pill solutions and services such as diagnostics, health literacy support and digital tools to help patients better manage their health. We consider it our responsibility to advocate for policies that advance knowledge and education, reduce barriers to treatment access to achieve better health for patients and unlock value for health systems.

In Turkey, we offer a diverse range of treatment options across different therapeutic areas such as cardiovascular disease, Mental Health, pain management, urology, respiratory disease and

dermatology and plan to further diversify with new offerings from our global portfolio. Our deep experience in emerging markets affords a tried-and-true method of achieving high impact across the patient experience, from awareness to adherence.

Through close collaboration with government, healthcare providers, technology partners and patients, we nurture healthcare systems that can adapt and respond to patients' ever-changing needs. Our organization is collaborating with medical associations, patient advocacy groups and academia to develop innovative, integrated solutions and programs to help strengthen both the delivery and quality of healthcare – ultimately, to reduce the burden of NCDs.

The NCD Academy is one example of Viatris partnership with the American College of Cardiology (ACC), the World Heart Federation (WHF) and the NCD Alliance (NCDA), to provide healthcare professionals with educational resources to enhance their clinical skills and improve knowledge on overall NCD management and health outcomes.

One of the key growth opportunities for Viatris lies with its biosimilars portfolio, an area where many Turkish companies have been investing in recent years. What is your strategy for biosimilars and what role do they play within your large portfolio?

Biosimilars contribute to a sustainable health care system by improving patient access to high-quality biological medicine while maintaining affordable prices. We are a leading global provider of biosimilars, an industry we helped found, and have received regulatory approval for biosimilars in more than 75 countries and more than 300 marketing authorizations for biosimilars around the world.

We offer one of the industry's largest and most diverse global biosimilars franchises focused on the areas of oncology, immunology, endocrinology, ophthalmology and dermatology. These vital products can help increase access for current and future patients while supporting the sustainability of healthcare systems.

What were the major challenges that you encountered by launching a new company during a pandemic?

The past year has been critical – bringing two great organizations together and managing the integration while at the same time ensuring patients around the world continued to get the high-

quality medicines they needed even in the midst of a global pandemic.

As a leading global pharmaceutical company, we are committed to doing our part to support public health needs amid the evolving COVID-19 pandemic. Our priorities have been to protect the health and safety of our workforce, produce critically needed medicines, and support our employees and society with our resources and expertise in the fight against COVID-19.

This has been possible thanks to the efforts of all our teams. We do believe in our responsibility of creating a positive and productive work environment where everyone, regardless of job or function, can deliver quality outcomes, and bring “their best” to work.

Of course, launching a new company with very limited face-to-face contact due to the pandemic has been a challenge. However, our long-term focus and investment in the digitalization of our go-to-market model and omni-channel management have helped us successfully shift our physical interactions and communication plans, to digital channels both externally and internally leading the way for an effective launch.

Looking towards the future, how do you expect the Turkish pharmaceutical market to evolve in the following years and what are Viatris’ priorities?

Turkey is the world’s 18th largest pharmaceutical market in value according to a recent IQVIA report. In the governments’ 11th Development Plan, which considers the 2019-2023 a period of economic transformation, the pharmaceutical sector has been named among the strategic sectors that will provide an opportunity for the technological leap that Turkey needs. Innovation, quality and advanced technology will be key drivers in a world that is constantly evolving.

In line with the government’s focus on expanding access to high-quality, affordable healthcare, Viatris is committed to be a partner of choice, maximizing its Global Healthcare Gateway and local footprint, connecting more people to more products and services in Turkey for to achieve improved healthcare outcomes in our community.

See more interviews