

Astellas Korea's Jeong Hai-Do, President



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The president of Astellas Korea offers his perspectives on Korea as a base for primary and clinical research, and the company's recent partnerships in the country.

You became president of Astellas Korea in 2011, following a long career at this affiliate. What were the biggest objectives you had when you started?

Indeed, after many years of working at this affiliate I was named president of Astellas Korea in 2011. This affiliate belongs to the Asian region; therefore we must align with Astellas's policy, vision and philosophy as outlined by our head office. I also wanted to make Astellas Korea a happy company and a great place to work. I also want Astellas to become one of the best companies to work for. As a result of hard work in the past few years, this has been coming to fruition.

To make our company happy, we have to accomplish a financial target initiated by head office, which has required an upgrade of our sales and marketing system.

What have been the greatest successes over the last three years?

Astellas should have a very good performance in terms of sales figures. This subsidiary recently upgraded its sales and marketing foundation and system to a system called STAR in 2012, which was created through the Leadership Program at Astellas's headquarters.

There have been big changes since I became president. After a new price system was introduced that involved drastic cost containment, the pharma industry experienced drastic price cuts. Transparency has also become very important; the government has been introducing a much stricter compliance system since 2010 to cope with these big issues.

In any case, my biggest achievement since 2011 has been the implementation of the STAR system. Through this new system, we are now performing very well. In 2012, Astellas Korea ranked 12th or 13th, followed by Lilly. But now we are ranked 10th or 11th on a quarterly basis.

Astellas has its primary research centers in its affiliates in Japan, the Netherlands and the United States. What potential does this affiliate have to engage in research activities?

The level of clinical research in Korea has indeed greatly improved. Several years ago, Astellas Korea joined the organization's global clinical trial network, so now we are conducting 17 global clinical trials in oncology and urology. In terms of innovation in Korea, we are the market leader in urology and transplantation. Thus, if Astellas Korea or our head office finds any good drug candidates, we will share the information. As of today, there have not yet been any big discoveries in Korea. Our headquarters created Astellas Innovation Management (AIM) in October 2013, which has one division for open innovation. This division explores opportunities with external resources and we are very eager to promote this division to be a critical part of the Astellas organization.

Astellas recently partnered with Daewoong for the co-marketing of Suglat, a diabetes drug. What is your expectation of this partnership?

As you know, Astellas Korea partnered with Daewoong quite recently for this drug. We are the market leader in urology and transplantation, but also have a lack of sales force in diabetes. Thus our partnership is a very complimentary combination; with Astellas Korea's sales force and Daewoong's desire for an enriched pipeline in diabetes. We want to enter the market as soon as possible and lower the risk as well as to maximize sales.

How important will it be in Korea in the future for companies like Astellas to work in tandem with Korean companies so that all patients can have access to the necessary medication?

The partnerships between multinational and domestic companies are increasing. As seen with our recent partnership with Daewoong, the business model allows multinational organizations like Astellas to supply the product to more doctors and patients. It is our mission to provide the best drugs to more patients so we can meet our vision and maximize profit. Internally, we can use Daewoong to our advantage in that the company is one of the best and most experienced in diabetes, which allows us to enter the market with minimal risk.

What is the strategic importance of Astellas Korea for the entire organization?

Astellas Korea accounts for 27 to 28 percent of the total Asian and Oceanian market, not including Japan. Last year our sales were KRW 170 billion, therefore we were an important contributor to the Asian and Oceanian regions's sales targets. Secondly, Astellas Korea has a very talented employee for exchange program. Our talented employees want to work in other Asian affiliates or even headquarters. In fact, I want to be an export center for talent and systems for the Asian and Oceanian region.

What are your ambitions to grow Astellas Korea in the next five years?

When I was inaugurated as president, I announced Astellas Korea's vision for 2020. I wanted Astellas Korea to be seventh among multinational pharmaceutical companies in Korea. I would like to see our sales target increase to KRW 400 billion. Secondly, in terms of operation, we want to set up an exporting center for human resources and consistent operation system.

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