

# AstraZeneca Mexico – Ugo de Jacobis, President

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*AstraZeneca's global strategic objectives are to achieve scientific leadership, to return to growth and to be a great place to work. The newly appointed president of the Mexico subsidiary discusses how he is implementing the three-fold plan to get the company back to growth.*

**You came back to Mexico to join AstraZeneca as president and general director for the country operations in 2013. How is it to be back and what mission were you entrusted with when you were appointed?**

I have been out of my native country for nine years and things have changed a lot over this time, but it feels good to be back. The mission I was entrusted with upon my appointment is strictly correlated with the company's global strategic priorities defined after the appointment of our new CEO Pascal Soriot: first, to achieve scientific leadership, second to return to growth, and third to be a great place to work. As a result, my responsibility in Mexico is to unfold the global strategy locally, make operations more productive and return the company to growth. And we are already actively working on this!

**You come from other large yet different pharmaceutical markets of the region, namely Colombia and Argentina. Which are the main differentiators of the Mexican pharmaceutical market versus these countries?**

Mexico is trying to follow the direction of other Latin American markets, for example through the extension of health coverage, which is a reality in Colombia and Argentina. On the other hand, Mexico enjoys some undisputed advantages over these countries: it's the second largest pharmaceutical market in Latin America, the second largest economy in the region and the tenth worldwide. International companies know that being in Mexico is critical for their operations. A further point I would like to stress is that regardless of the changes the country is undergoing, the level of certainty it provides – especially from an economic perspective – is higher than in other countries in Latin America. Competition is fierce, as more than 400 companies are present in the market, but the market as well as the regulatory framework in place provide the necessary certainty to keep investing in Mexico.

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## **What is the role of Mexico within the global strategy of AstraZeneca?**

Mexico belongs to AstraZeneca's International region, which encompasses 60 markets worldwide from Australia to Latin America, crossing China and the Middle East. Mexico is an important player, mainly for the size of the market and its positioning – it is fifteenth among the 60 within the region. AstraZeneca wants Mexico to be among its top ten International markets and this is why I have the responsibility of returning the country to growth. In addition, Mexico has always been a very innovative market with regard to healthcare, so it is of great importance for an innovation-driven company such as AstraZeneca to have a solid base here.

## **R&D-driven companies such as AstraZeneca are facing an increased competition from generic drugs worldwide. However, the underlying demographic trends remains favorable to long-term industry growth, as the company is focusing on three areas which fit this trend, meaning cardio-vascular and metabolic, oncology and respiratory. How does this global strategy translate in Mexico?**

Today AstraZeneca's global strategy is very well fulfilled in Mexico. Over the past year we have changed our business model to make sure we can serve these specific therapeutic areas in a more productive and efficient way than before. To consolidate our focus on these areas, at the start of 2014 we acquired the Bristol-Myers Squibb share of our global diabetes alliance for example. More recently we acquired Almirall's respiratory portfolio and, given the epidemiological profile of the country, this move represents a perfect fit for the company's strategy in Mexico.

The company has a strong pipeline with potential for 14-16 new medical entity or line extension regulatory submissions and 8-10 approvals in 2015-2016, specifically in the cardiovascular and metabolic, oncology and respiratory therapeutic areas. In order to prepare for these product launches in Mexico we are currently working very closely with the whole value chain to make sure these new medicines will be made available to patients.

## **Along with Roche, AstraZeneca was one of the early movers in Mexico in strengthening its ability to service the needs of the state-driven Medicare provision. How has this collaboration evolved over time?**

Given that AstraZeneca is an innovation-driven company, where we put patients first, our main question is always how to bring innovation to our patients. In my opinion drug access is a shared responsibility between the private and public sector. Fortunately the collaboration with the government and authorities has improved over time and today there is a much more open dialogue to define how to make innovation available at public institutions. I believe measures implemented in other countries such as integrated services may offer viable solutions to a challenge that both private and public sectors are facing: drug access. We are moving forward, and certainly we need to be creative and sometimes think a bit out of the box, but challenges always bring opportunities, and that's how I like to see it.

## **How will the recently announced agreement between AMIIF (the Mexican Association of Pharmaceutical Research Industries) and IMSS (the Mexican Social Security Institute) allow Mexico to be better positioned at a regional level to conduct clinical research?**

We are all very enthusiastic about this milestone, which is a fantastic step forward. On the one hand it will increase the number of clinical trials, as today IMSS represents 24 percent of the total number of institutions where clinical research can be conducted here in Mexico. On the other, having Mexican patients involved in the development of new medicines will help us accelerate registration and, thus, get innovation to the market faster – also thanks to the tremendous job COFEPRIS has been doing over the past few years. Approval times in Mexico have decreased significantly which is

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remarkable.

At AstraZeneca we are particularly proud of this agreement, as over a number of years the company has actively supported clinical R&D programs in the country, with an investment of nearly USD 18 million. Today in Mexico we are running 27 clinical studies involving over 4000 patients and 40 local investigator sponsored trials. In the past some of AstraZeneca's R&D has not come to Mexico because approval times were too long and because the number of institutions where you could conduct trials was limited. The opening of IMSS will be a game changer and this is one of the reasons why Mexico is a focus country for AstraZeneca. In addition, we are also working with other institutions to support researchers to develop their innovations. We are the number five drug company in Mexico and have the responsibility to make sure innovation is a priority, in every aspect.

**The executive director of the Mexican Federation of Diabetes told us that the pharmaceutical industry plays a key role in the continuous education of the medical community, as most of the doctors do not attend trainings after graduating from medical school. You have a number of initiatives in place in Mexico, such as the AZ Medical Information Department and NeurocienciaAZ. What is the vision behind these programs?**

AstraZeneca's strategic objective to achieve scientific leadership is driving not only clinical research, but also medical education. For this reason we work closely with medical societies and key opinion leaders, participate in the key congresses at local and international level for the therapeutic areas we focus on, and we are also planning to create innovative education programs where doctors can always access scientific information about these areas. We are looking at ways to leverage digital technology to improve medical education, using for example apps and digital tools. This will be part of our digital strategy.

**Where will we see AstraZeneca in Mexico in five years?**

Mexico is undergoing tremendous changes, which can represent a major challenge but also a great opportunity if you are able to develop a strategic plan and are smart enough to anticipate changes, as the rule of the game will be flexibility and adaptability. In five years I hope you'll find an AstraZeneca with a completely new business culture, a company growing above the market rate, among the top three players in the diabetes market and delivering innovation in oncology as never before, with targeted molecules and biotechnology. And I am sure we'll be able to reach this goal, as this is my personal commitment with the company.

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