

**Interview: Fabrice Chouraqui - President
Latin America & Canada, Novartis, USA**



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PharmaBoardroom spoke to Fabrice Chouraqui, President of Novartis Latin America and Canada at the Financial Times LatAm Healthcare & Life Sciences Summit in September 2015. He emphasizes the criticality of access to innovation for patients in one of the world's fastest-growing regions.

You were appointed President of Novartis Latin America and Canada in 2014. What initial objectives did you set out for yourself?

My assessment as I joined the region is that although health authorities are trying to do their best to meet the needs of their citizens, there is still a lot that needs to be done. Given the large unmet medical needs in Latin America, as a company we need to be more ambitious and innovative; we need to begin a collaborative dialogue with authorities to identify areas where we may be able to help as part of our knowhow and expertise. We see great strides in science, yet far too many people do not have access to these innovative treatments. It is really our duty to work in partnership with governments and public and private payers to ensure that patients can access these health solutions faster. In Canada, we do not see this to the same degree yet access remains a constant challenge, this in being able to assure that the right drugs are used on the right patient and at the right time of their disease. This should not be restricted to a fraction of the eligible patient population, or make it available too late in the course of the disease that it is no longer as effective.

Given the long approval times that we see for many medications in Latin America, what elements of the innovation that Novartis brings do you have to emphasize the most to convince the authorities of the added value provided?

I am very proud to work for such an organization like Novartis, where we are truly doing revolutionary things that will change the quality of life of patients and how diseases are treated. I would like to highlight that it is really all about the level of innovation a new treatment brings to patients. We can talk about long lead times for registration or delayed access for drugs with small incremental innovation, but for me the only way to really change the paradigm is to advocate for fast registration and access for real innovation that truly cures diseases or makes a significant impact on the way people live.

What is the strategic importance of Latin America within the Novartis organization?

Latin America is a fast-growing region and Novartis in most of these countries has a long standing presence. Although the commodity boom has come to an end and growth rates will no longer be at the level we have seen in the past years, growth is likely to remain well above that of many parts of the world. There are large unmet medical needs in these countries and a growing middle-class aspiring for better quality of care.

What is your outlook for the future of Latin America?

It is our duty as a research-based pharmaceutical company to recognize that there are budget challenges and we ought to work with public and private payers to ensure that access to innovation is not only reserved to those who can afford it. All eligible patients need to be able to access this innovation. This will require innovative thinking, more sophisticated approaches from all parties and an open dialogue in how we can work together to address the needs of these patients. I am very optimistic that if we can create the right political, legal and access frameworks, we will ensure that innovation is not only reserved for a fraction of the population â?? but really made available for all.

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