

Interview: Vinod Ramachandran â?? Country Manager, Dr. Reddyâ??s Canada



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Vinod Ramachandran, general manager of Dr. Reddyâ??s Canadian affiliate, highlights the exciting journey of Dr. Reddyâ??s in Canada since 2013, the companyâ??s upcoming three specialty product launches, and the goal of Dr. Reddyâ??s to supply affordable and quality generic medicines.

Vinod, you established the Dr. Reddyâ??s affiliate here four years ago. How has the affiliate developed since?

Dr. Reddyâ??s has made significant progress since August 2013, when the entity was established in Canada. We have a small team locally in Canada focused on front-end operations with support from teams in India and USA. Today, we have four products on the market and plan to launch two to three products in the next 18 months.

Dr. Reddyâ??s Canada launched its operations with the approval of Fondaparinux injection, which was the first generic Fondaparinux injection approved in Canada. This Fondaparinux injection provided us the ability to serve both the retail and hospital segments and establish Dr. Reddyâ??s as a generic company with its customers. Subsequently, we launched additional products that enabled us to demonstrate our commitment to the Canadian market.

Dr. Reddyâ??s has leveraged its global R&D strengths and capabilities to file complex and limited competition products in Canada. As the pipeline matures and receives approval from Health Canada, the business has an exciting future ahead.

With such exciting product launches in the pipeline, how is Dr. Reddy's Canada expanding its operations to handle them?

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Dr. Reddy's has a capable and talented team in place that is experienced and well prepared to launch new products. The company is committed to investing additional resources to support the new launches as needed. We collaborate with our service providers to ensure access to Dr. Reddy's products as soon as it is launched.

There has been consolidation within the generics industry as well. How does Dr. Reddy's differentiate itself to compete effectively in Canada?

Dr. Reddy's is committed to accelerating access to affordable and innovative medicines because we believe that "Good Health Can't Wait". We deliver on our purpose through a set of promises we make to our customers and partners:

- We bring expensive medicines within reach.
- We address unmet patient needs.
- We help patients manage disease better.
- We work with partners to help them succeed.
- We enable and help our partners ensure that our products are always available where needed.

Our business strategy and operating priorities are geared to act on these promises through providing:

- First-to-market, tough-to-make products
- Differentiated products for unmet medical needs
- Value-added services for patients and customers

For example, Dr. Reddy's launched our "Infuze" program to provide infusion support for zoledronic acid 5 mg/100 ml injectable. This was the first patient support program for Dr. Reddy's in Canada. The program is available throughout Canada; Dr. Reddy's pays the cost of the infusion so there is no out of pocket costs for the patients. Today, we are the only company in Canada that is still offering this patient support program for this product.

As a relatively new entrant, how have you found the market access, pricing and reimbursement environment here in Canada?

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The Canadian market is a hybrid market having similarities to both Europe & US. The Canadian market is about one-tenth the size of the US pharmaceutical market. The innovative companies play a crucial role in creating the initial market for new products, yet Canada is considered one of the slower countries to obtain market access for new therapies. The generic price is driven by the price of the branded pharmaceutical product.

The prices for generic pharmaceutical products in the retail segment has been governed by the Pan-Canadian Tiered Pricing Framework since 01 April 2014. Typically, the hospitals consolidate their buying through Group Purchasing Organizations (GPOs). Dr. Reddy's has been able to gain market access for its products in both the retail and the hospital sector.

There has been considerable pricing pressure placed on generic companies in Canada. For example, Quebec has negotiated significant savings from the generic industry and I expect this will lead to future downward pricing pressures across Canada.

Canada has had a thriving local generics industry, but the landscape is becoming more and more competitive with foreign entrants like Dr. Reddy's. How competitive is the local industry versus more low-cost players?

The local generic industry in Canada is strong with established players. The local industry has adapted successfully to the changing landscape with new foreign entrants.

Due to downward pricing pressure in generic pharmaceutical products, most of the local generic companies have operations in or source products from low-cost countries like India. This allows them to take advantage of the global supply chain and benefit from lower manufacturing costs. The competitive environment of the generic industry ultimately benefits both patients and payers.

How are you reinforcing the Dr. Reddy's brand in Canada?

We have an excellent track record in Canada and our customers recognize that. We strive to live up to the promise of accelerating access to affordable and innovative medicines.

I am reinforcing Dr. Reddy's brand by ensuring that we continue to be a reliable supplier of affordable and quality generic products to Canadians. As we grow and expand in Canada, we continue to adhere to our purpose as an organization because we all believe that "Good Health Can't Wait". We have demonstrated that commitment through our "Infuze" program, where we saw a patient need and we have continued to provide the needed support to those patients.

Going back to what you said about Canada being one-tenth of the US market, how strategic are the Canadian operations to HQ?

Dr. Reddy's is committed to the Canadian market. The senior management strongly believes that Canada is an important country for Dr. Reddy's and certainly has the potential to become one-tenth of the US business as the pipeline matures. We continue to invest in R&D for the Canadian market. We plan to launch complex generics and limited competition products that will help Dr. Reddy's provide significant benefit to our customers and patients.

To begin wrapping up, through your career, you have moved from the pre-clinical research side with a CRO to the branded side with GSK and now to generics. What has motivated your career journey to date?

The journey of my career has taken me through various segments of the pharmaceutical industry, allowing me to experience discovering new drugs in laboratory as well as making drugs available to patients. Throughout this journey, my motivation has been to help people manage their health by enabling access to quality medicines so that people can live healthier lives.

I started my career after graduate school at a CRO in Cleveland. Working at the CRO taught me to focus on customer needs and delivering results on time. But I realized that it is just one piece of the puzzle. My next role at GlaxoSmithKline provided me the broad experience in drug discovery and development, where I saw projects that progressed from a laboratory bench to patients' bedside. The time at GlaxoSmithKline provided me insights on how brand companies focus on addressing unmet medical needs to help patients.

At Dr. Reddy's, my positions have allowed me to be deeply involved in the world of generics from research to commercialization. This experience has allowed me to be a part of an industry that has been instrumental in bringing down the cost of expensive medicines, which has helped make prescription products more affordable to patients and payers.

As General Manager for Dr. Reddy's in Canada, my primary objective is to ensure affordable and quality medicines, with reliable supply to Canadians. I hope this helps each person to live a healthier life.

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