

# Interview with Matthieu Accolas, General Manager, Servier Turkey

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**Poland and Turkey present many similarities, in terms of market size and frequency of reforms for instance, but also a lot of differences, as the generic penetration is much lower here. As a manager, what specific skills developed during your tenure in Poland are you applying in this market?**

In both countries, you have to adapt fast to the environment. Despite numerous similarities, the markets are different in the sense that Turkey presents much more a Western profile, especially looking at the percentage of drug reimbursement.

In both cases, we are talking about very positive and fast growing economies and an increased access to healthcare, which makes those countries highly interesting and under permanent development. On the other hand, in Turkey just like in Poland, we face the same difficulties for patients's access to innovative drugs on the market. Turks are eager to adapt in a fast changing environment. Leadership and creativity are key skills for a manager to succeed in Turkey.

**Can Turkey afford to have a westernized health model in your opinion?**

There is a natural growth of drug consumption, but the health budget remains stable. Drug prices have been dramatically decreased and are now among the lowest in the world. At the same time, Turkish patients have access to innovative drugs many years after other European countries and with more restrictions.

The pharmaceutical industry is struggling now, and I believe that Turkey has to invest more for the health of the population to adjust to western countries and adapt the healthcare budget accordingly.

**Servier Turkey was the third world leading subsidiary in 2009. Three years later, to what extent has the company been affected by the crisis, and what have been the main strategies you have put in place to maintain growth?**

As many companies we haven't been able to grow our turnover since 3 years.

This difficult environment was in fact an opportunity for us to adapt and review our own model. We made many internal changes over this time period, such as, resources and organization optimization in order to be more effective in the market place.

Overall, we have been able to strengthened our position in cardiology and diabetology. We have a broad product portfolio for the treatment of coronary artery disease, heart failure and hypertension. In 2011-2012 Servier Turkey has successfully launched a new fixed dose combination in hypertension

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## **When a market shrinks like it has been the case for Turkey last year, to what extent is it important to focus on the core drugs of a company's portfolio versus diversifying it?**

In a situation like this, it is critical to focus on the drugs which are sustainable. At the same time, we recently put together a team in order to identify the best and most effective ways to adapt to the needs of the patients and the doctors, to ultimately bring new answers and solutions to the market.

In this context, we have increased our partnership with endocrinologists, internists and cardiologists. Each year we are rewarding the Turkish cardiologists for their publications in an international scientific journal. The first award was given in 2011, and we are proud to contribute and support science and education of the Turkish doctors.

We have also adapted to the market conditions in the sense that we have significantly developed our investment in R&D in Turkey over the last years. We believe that integrating Turkish doctors within international studies is beneficial for them to be globally recognized.

## **Partnering with universities and research institutes are critical to fulfil one of Servier Group's key principles, that of always being at the forefront of research, with over 25% of the turnover reinvested in research activities. How much R&D is done in Turkey and what are the most important partnerships for Servier in this area?**

Servier is a foundation investing 25% of the turnover for research activities. As the company is not listed on the Stock Exchange, there is no pressure from the shareholders. This eventually gives Servier a unique advantage to invest more in research.

Overall Servier is investing 7 million Turkish Liras each year in Turkey, including research. We work with numerous Turkish scientific societies and universities. Depending on which research program we want to run and in which specific field, we look for the most adapted partnership. For example, we have recently decided to develop a new drug for the treatment of the Behcet disease, an orphan disease that causes chronic inflammation of the blood vessels or vasculitis among other complications that result in damage to various organs. This disease was discovered by a Turkish doctor, Dr Hulusi Behcet. Servier group has decided to give to Turkey the world leading role as the main international coordinator is Turkish: Prof. Dr. Ahmet Gul.

For any new research program, we systematically include Turkey in the feasibility phase. From the group's perspective, Turkey is definitely perceived as an important country with high quality of doctors and good level of research.

What we need to see in the future is a higher recognition of innovation, and an increase of patients' access to innovative drugs. Turkish patients benefit from some of our drugs only three to five years after other European patients. Furthermore, not all patients with the related disease fully benefit from our registered drugs, due to some restrictions in the reimbursement system.

## **How challenging is it to retain the brightest minds within the company?**

In the changing environment, the way Servier has been able to adapt fast and provide solutions has increased our reputation in Turkey. Servier is known for the quality and the loyalty of its employees. This applies all over the world, and all the more in Turkey, where 56% of our employees have over ten years of service. Besides, 93% of our employees are University graduates, mainly from scientific disciplines. Therefore we have employees with a very high level of education.

Our people are keen to work in a foundation for research, driven by science, providing career opportunities and with good working conditions.

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## **What is the company's scope of activities with regard to production in Turkey?**

For the past 26 years we have established a strong production partnership with a leading local pharmaceutical company. This cooperation is answering to our highest international production quality standards. We are producing more than 6 million boxes each year in Turkey.

## **What role will play Servier in shaping Turkey's future pharmaceutical and healthcare market?**

We have been working in Turkey for 34 years and established our own subsidiary 26 years ago. Turkey is a very important country for the group. We are continuously working to bring new drugs to the patients and to the doctors. We communicate in a highly ethical and scientific manner. We have succeeded to increase our performance, keeping our high levels of standards. We are proud of these achievements.

Last year, more than 3 million patients have benefited from our drugs. 5 out of our 16 products are in a leading position in their respective indications.

We have increased our investments in Turkey over the past years, mainly in research. I see a positive future for Servier in Turkey, given the market potential, the quality of our drugs, and of our staff. I am convinced that Turkey will play a major role in the global pharmaceutical market, and will find a way to adapt to its own needs in order to give to all patients a better access to innovative drugs.

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