

Novo Nordisk Malaysia – Noha Shawky, General Manager



15.09.2014

Tags:

[diabetes](#), [insulin](#), [CSR](#)

Novo Nordisk Malaysia's general manager shares the ongoing fight to cure diabetes and talks about the necessity to raise awareness, with for instance their current MoU with the ministry of health: "This program will be showcased worldwide and will serve as a benchmark and example of how collaboration between the industry, government and main stakeholders can have a real impact on people."

Could you start by giving us an overview of Malaysia as a world renowned healthcare provider, since it was recently ranked as third best worldwide for its quality of healthcare?

The healthcare system in Malaysia is quite advanced, due to strong government efforts. Providing access to healthcare to all Malaysians for a price of RM 1 (USD 30 cents) is absolutely extraordinary and a perfect example of why this system is unique and great for Malaysians. Quality of treatment is also very good; however there are limitations to providing the best and most innovative treatment with budget limitations.

Even though this is excellent for Malaysians it also sets challenges for the industry, given that the government is always trying to contain its expenditure on healthcare. For instance, the total health expenditure is around 3.6 percent of GDP, 175th ranked in the world.

The Malaysian government has the ambition to transform Malaysia into a high income nation by 2020. This is of course a great ambition. It could, however, require some changes to the healthcare system on a medium and long term to ensure high quality of care and access to innovation and better treatments to Malaysians patients. This is an important aspect in supporting socioeconomic development and prosperity.

The Malaysian government is also looking at implementing the One Care system which would allow patients from the public sector to get affordable treatments from the private sector and this would

truly represent new opportunities to bring innovative and advanced treatments to patients. At the moment the private sector is much more open to innovation and new generations of products than the public sector.

Could you give us more details about the severity of the diabetes pandemic?

Around the world, nearly 400 million people have diabetes and by 2020 this number could reach 500 million. This is very unfortunate for patients but it also brings a new set of challenges and opportunities for the industry and Novo Nordisk. In Malaysia, 2.5 million people have diabetes and by 2020 nearly 4.5 million are projected to have diabetes in Malaysia. So diabetes represents a worldwide pandemic and burden for government and citizens. Although it affects every country, it is currently affecting Southeast Asia to a larger extent, given rising standards of living, urbanization and changing lifestyles.

Novo Nordisk is a world renowned insulin leader and has been performing extremely well in the last years. Why is Novo Nordisk in Malaysia ranked ninth and performing so well?

We attribute the success of Novo Nordisk in Malaysia and around the world to our very dedicated staff. Diabetes has always been our focus and putting the patient at the center of our decision making process with the healthcare professionals and authorities is the only way to perform well; Novo Nordisk has understood this paradigm very well. The patient is at the center of our triple bottom line strategy which integrates financial, social and environmental factors. Of course as a company we have to be financially performing, especially as a public company, but Novo Nordisk is a company that reinvests part of its profit into CSR and R&D to always keep our patients as our main focus.

Every country has unmet medical needs from a patient and clinician point of view; this is as well relevant in Malaysia. This is why we have engaged early on into a health dialogue with the health authorities to help bridge these unmet needs. For instance, we started the "Changing Diabetes" programs focusing on raising awareness around diabetes as well as theory to practice workshops focusing on training medical practitioners.

Last year, Novo Nordisk and the Malaysian Ministry of Health signed a memorandum of understanding, making their partnership on the "Jom Mama" diabetes prevention project official. Why was Malaysia chosen to develop this project?

The Jom Mama project is the first research project worldwide under Novo Nordisk's Changing Future Health program to prevent diabetes and other non-communicable diseases. Malaysia was chosen to develop this project because of the mutually shared passion and dedication of the Malaysian health authorities, healthcare professionals and Novo Nordisk to change the pandemic trend of Diabetes and protect the future generations. It is fundamental to intervene as early as possible with diabetes and in the case of pregnant women, gestational diabetes is a great concern for next generations. By reducing the cases of gestational diabetes, we will prevent diabetes to develop in the future. In this sense the "Jom Mama" program is a real jewel and will contribute to helping young couples improve their health before pregnancy.

This MoU has a long term perspective and goes in line with the government's economic transformation program to transform Malaysia into a developed country. This program will be showcased worldwide and will serve as a benchmark and example of how collaboration between the industry, government and main stakeholders can have a real impact on people.

How important is Malaysia for Novo Nordisk group at the moment?

Malaysia in terms of population is small in comparison to some of neighboring countries like Indonesia or the Philippines. However, as discussed earlier, Malaysia has high quality healthcare system and clear development ambition, which makes Malaysia important as a center of excellence for clinical research and development projects. Everyone is keen on advancing the healthcare system in Malaysia. This makes it very interesting for companies to first develop pilot projects locally and second, gives the industry confidence that the government is a partner and working towards the same aim: improving patients' lives.

One key thing to remember about diabetes around the world is the "Rule of Halves". This states that out of all the diabetic patients in the world, only half of them are diagnosed, of those only half receive treatment, and of those who receive treatment, only half actually achieve their treatment goals. Our goal is to break this "Rule of Halves" and to have everyone achieve a good quality of life and avoid any type of health complication on a long term basis.

What is the success rate of your insulin in Malaysia and how will you ensure it reaches every patient?

Novo Nordisk has 90 years of history being an insulin leader worldwide and it is the company with the most comprehensive diabetes product portfolio available from the conventional Insulin to the newest generation of Diabetes treatments in the best devices. Additionally, our future pipeline for diabetes is also the most advanced. So we have a Diabetes treatment suitable for every profile of people with diabetes. Our mission does not stop at making the products available. Through our Changing Diabetes® program, we aim at raising awareness, prevention and better treatment of Diabetes.

What products do you have in the pipeline at the moment to give you this competitive edge and reinforce your position as an insulin leader in Malaysia?

We are making all our products range available in Malaysia and we will continue to make sure the newest and most advanced products are approved by authorities and available in Malaysia among the first markets.

Malaysia is a growing market and, at the same time, a competitive market. The competitive edge of Novo Nordisk is its focus and commitment. We want to make a difference in all the therapy areas we work with. Novo Nordisk is a solution provider and a partner and not just a medicine provider.

How shall we find Novo Nordisk Malaysia in the next five years? Where would you personally like to take the company?

Our aim as a company is to continue the fight against diabetes and to find the ultimate cure. This has been the wish of our CEO, Lars Sørensen who has dedicated his life to finding this cure. Although he might not see this cure during his period as CEO it is important to continue this legacy and keep this vision as there are hundreds of millions of lives at stake.

In terms of business priority, we will ensure that we continue working on the three accesses: awareness, prevention and better treatment for all our therapy areas (Diabetes, Hemophilia and Growth Hormone). We continue provide better treatments to people with Diabetes in Malaysia and break the rule of halves by getting them to the optimal level of controls and ultimately the desired outcome and quality of life. We also want to be the preferred partner to all our stakeholders, and be the best work place for our employees and provide them a life changing career.

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