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A collaboration of multidisciplinary stakeholders from the public and private sectors is needed to improve access and adoption of innovative medicines

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Tags:

Riaz Buksh, general manager of Bayer's Pharmaceuticals Division in Thailand, Cambodia, Myanmar, and Laos, highlights the importance of the mission "Science for a Better Life" and innovation in the affiliate, as well as the vision of Bayer in driving transformative partnerships with government and medical stakeholders.

Could you introduce yourself to our international audience?

I am the general manager of Bayer Pharmaceuticals Division, Bayer Thai Co., Ltd. I have more than 23 years of experience in the pharmaceuticals industry in Australia, New Zealand and Thailand. I started my career at Bayer Pharmaceuticals Division in Australia in 2012 in a marketing role and assumed the role of general manager, Bayer Pharmaceuticals Division in New Zealand in 2014.

In 2015, I was appointed as general manager of Bayer's Pharmaceuticals Division and director of Bayer Thai, overseeing Bayer's pharmaceuticals business in Thailand, Myanmar, Cambodia and Laos. I have been an elected board member of the Thailand Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturers Association (PReMA) since 2017.

What are your strategic priorities and objectives for Bayer's pharmaceuticals business in Thailand?

At Bayer, innovation is the cornerstone of our mission "Science for A Better Life" and a core element of our strategy. We define innovation as "new solutions that generate added-value for both healthcare professionals, patients and Thai society". Our notable successes in addressing the highest unmet medical needs in Thailand and across the region to date have led to strong brands across our therapeutic areas. Going forward, we will continue to grow our portfolio of innovative medicines. We also aim to lead in alleviating the rising burden of difficult-to-treat diseases such as cancer, cardiovascular diseases and eye diseases in Thailand's ageing population.

Through innovation, we hope to contribute to help people living longer, healthier and continue to productively contribute to society. It is also important to acknowledge Bayer's success and growth in Thailand comes from our talented pool of employees, who are constantly working in partnership with the medical community to help improve patients' lives. We will continue to attract, nurture and develop our people in order to grow Bayer's footprint in Thailand in a sustainable and responsible manner.

How important is Thailand/Cambodia/Myanmar/Laos to Bayer's pharmaceuticals business in Asia Pacific?

Last year was another year of robust growth for our Bayer Pharmaceuticals Division in the Asia/Pacific region (including China and Japan). In 2018, the region's sales grew 7.3 percent to over \$5.2 billion. Asia/ Pacific region contributed more than 30 percent to the division's global sales and continued to be the fastest-growing region for Bayer's Pharmaceutical business

(Source: Bayer Annual Report 2018). Our business in Thailand is one of the key contributors to our pharmaceuticals sales in Asia Pacific. Emerging trends such as changes in life expectancy and disease patterns as well as advances in technology and innovation will bring new opportunities for the healthcare and pharmaceuticals industry in our region.

Within our cluster there are promising societal perspectives. People are living longer. The UN has projected that the number of Thai people aged 60 and older will increase from 10.7 million in 2015 to 18.3 million in 2030^[1]. There is a significant shift in disease priority from the critical concern in infectious diseases in the past to non-communicable diseases such as heart diseases, cancer, and other age-related diseases today and in the future. Innovation and technology are more advanced today and are evolving rapidly. Being in the digital age right now generates more opportunity to achieve significant improvements in health innovation and patient treatment options. Bayer understands these important trends. We offer innovative solutions to address the healthcare needs of the ageing population. We also leverage innovative approaches to develop new and better healthcare solutions for patients in our region.

Can you provide an overview of the current positioning of Bayer Thailand in the market and the company's competitive advantages?

With strong and consistently above market growth in recent years, our pharmaceuticals business in Thailand is now ranked among the top 10 pharmaceuticals multinational corporations. This performance is driven by our portfolio of innovative medicines which addresses the unmet needs of healthcare professionals and patients. For example, our portfolio of innovative medicines enhances stroke prevention, treat liver cancer and eye diseases related to ageing and diabetes which are significant diseases in the Thai society.

Bayer Pharmaceutical Division holds a mixed portfolio globally on prescription drugs for therapeutic areas of cardiology, oncology, gynaecology, haematology, and ophthalmology. How is this focus reflected on the local level?

We will continue to grow our portfolio of innovative medicines and partner with government and other stakeholders to address societal needs arising from the increased burden of chronic diseases in Thailand. Our vision to improve the quality of life of the Thai patients and aligned with the government's direction to improve and grow healthcare infrastructure. In cardiovascular diseases (CVDs) we are supporting the health system in the shift from traditional acute care to preventive, value-based care by embracing innovative therapies and technologies for the long-term prevention of stroke, heart attacks and other serious cardiovascular events. These are the leading causes of death and disability in Thailand. We believe this approach will bring more clinical, economic, and societal benefits to Thailand in the long-term.

Our cancer therapies target some of the Top 5 cancers in Thai patients, such as liver cancer, colorectal cancer as well as prostate cancer, and they have been shown to improve survival rates and quality of life for advanced cancer patients. We are working with the government and various stakeholders to broaden access to our cancer treatments to patients. Bayer also offers treatment in eye diseases due to ageing and diabetes which affect a growing number of patients as a result of Thailand's ageing population. Our radiology solutions provide physicians with enhanced diagnostic accuracy so that treatments can be applied earlier and more effectively.

Bayer is the pioneer in contraception and gynaecology with almost nine decades of experience. We continue to focus our research in women's health on developing new therapies for common gynaecological diseases such as endometriosis.

What is your vision for Bayer Pharmaceuticals Division in Thailand and in driving transformative partnerships with government and medical stakeholders?

Governments and innovators like Bayer share the same goal of ensuring patients have access to good quality healthcare and improving patient outcomes. In view of the rising healthcare burden related to the aging population, investing in innovative medicines and technologies has become more important than ever. Innovative medicines can put healthcare systems on a more sustainable path by reducing inefficiencies and costs, such as reducing hospitalizations, physician visits, or other expensive procedures and surgeries. Ongoing research and successful introduction of new innovation are required to address unmet needs and gaps that still exist with current ways of managing diseases. A collaboration of multidisciplinary stakeholders from the public and private sectors is needed to improve access and adoption of innovative medicines. On one hand, the government and healthcare systems play a crucial role in developing policies that can keep pace with innovation, enabling speedier approvals and timely access and adoption of innovative therapies and technologies. On the other hand, we as innovators play a collaborative role in providing insights and evidence that drive faster and better decision making by payers and regulators for access improvement. By working together, different stakeholders can jointly identify opportunities and remove barriers through innovative approaches to achieve the best outcomes for patients and society.

What is your assessment of the current dynamics in Thailand and their recent evolution, with a focus on the key opportunities and concerns discussed with Thai governmental stakeholders?

Bayer appreciates the Thai government's direction in driving towards innovative-based economy under Thailand 4.0. In addition to benefits to patients, this will also benefit economic development in Thailand. We support the government's ambitious vision by enabling innovation in medicine and clinical knowledge development. As a research-based pharmaceutical company, Bayer generates essential economic value in terms of job creation, investment in clinical trials and continual medical education, which are key activities in pharmaceutical research and development. Referring to the Clinical Research Impact Study (2016), one baht spending in clinical research in Thailand can generate total economic, health and societal benefits around 2.9 baht. Thailand has implemented significant improvement recently through various regulatory reforms. This is one among other key critical factors to enhance clinical research ecosystem and attract more pharmaceutical research and development investments to Thailand. Additionally, improvements in the intellectual property regulations, enforcement and enabling a market environment for better access to innovative medicines through universal health coverage can be advantageous to enable innovation- and investment-friendly ecosystem, encourage technology adoption and enhance investor confidence. Bayer is ready to collaborate with the Thai government towards continual improvements in this context.

To conclude, what would you like to achieve in the near future as a leader for Bayer Pharmaceuticals Division in Thailand?

We are committed to growing our business operations in Thailand and will continue to contribute to Thailand's economic development. With our commitment to innovation, our global research and development activities are constantly evolving to develop new and better treatments to address the healthcare challenges related to evolving disease patterns and societal patterns, which are also applicable to Thailand. With this, our goals are to consistently lead the science on treating diseases with high unmet medical need and to alleviate the increasing burden of diseases in an aging society in Thailand. We hope to collaborate more closely with government, the healthcare community and other stakeholders in Thailand to improve access and adoption of innovative medicines and technologies, which will result in significant improvements in outcomes for patients, health system and society as a whole.

[1] World Population Ageing 2015, page 24 : United Nation

https://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/publications/pdf/ageing/WPA2015_Highlights.pdf

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