Stefan Ohlsson â?? General Manager, IQVIA Nordics

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IQVIA is a leading global provider of information, innovative technology solutions and contract research services for the healthcare industry. Stefan Ohlsson,

general manager at IQVIA Nordics, discusses how Swedenâ??s unique quality registries can be further improved, the companyâ??s ability to help clients at any stage of development, and how IQVIA can leverage the COREâ??s unparalleled data resources, advanced analytics, domain expertise, and innovative technology to transform patient treatment.

You were appointed last year as IQVIAâ??s General Manager Nordics, what have you identified as your priorities since then?

Looking back at my history working in the healthcare space for over two decades, the potential and opportunities around data are more significant than ever. Sweden and the Nordics have a unique asset because of the quantity and quality of the information available. When you work in that space for that long, you understand the importance of non-identified data in making better healthcare decisions and advancing patient outcomes. A typical information technology (IT) company has the challenge of bringing data and technology to where it really makes a difference, the patients. This is where IQVIA plays an important role. By utilizing IQVIAâ??s unparalleled source of non-identified patient data, deploying advanced analytics and our technology solutions and adding our domain expertise, we can make a difference.

How important will Sweden be to IQVIAâ??s global development to this convergence of data and analytics?

Because of the historical data sets and the quality registries we have, even though the population is relatively small, we can do hybrid studies with advanced technology. We can do a smaller clinical trial with a small cohort, but we can apply that to historical data, conducting retrospective studies with anonymized data. We talk about the democratization of data, ensuring that the information is used where it can benefit the patients and itâ??s not stalled at a certain level because of local decisions. Sweden has a life sciences strategy, as Jenni Nordborg from the Life Sciences Office pointed out, but the strategy has to permeate all the way down the ecosystem, touching every corner of the system. There are many levels in Sweden: 21 county councils, 290 municipalities, and at some point, they all have a say. The accountability is fragmented and that is an area where things can be improved.

With the new health policy being pushed by the Swedish Ministry of Health, what is the role of IQVIA in supporting the government in defining a clearer regulatory framework?

We need to ensure that we comply with the regulatory framework and work with the EUâ??s General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) in mind. We can also speed up the process because today it takes too long to find the patients, to give the right diagnosis to the patients and start the right treatments. 60 percent of trials have avoidable costly protocol amendments, 50 percent of trial miss enrollment targets and 80 percent of studies miss timelines. These are alarming statistics and areas where we can help Sweden become faster and more effective.

Sweden was a very attractive market for clinical trials, but the number of trials has been in decline. What has to be done to get these numbers up again?

I think we have to be seen as a collaborative country. When we talk about rare disease, we need to involve different nations, and we need to ensure Sweden is part of that mix. We need to respond quickly to have a process to support the trials all the way into the hospitals. The vision and strategy are fine at a national level, it is the execution that needs more attention.

Do you see where Sweden could learn from other countries, not only on clinical trials but also in the ways to implement the vision they have?

As a region, the Nordics can benefit from collaboration. We see that it is not only Sweden that has a high ambition of becoming a leading life science nation, but also Denmark and Finland have also taken major steps in the direction of working with genomics and research to ensure they are attractive destinations for multinational companies. The countries can learn from each other and ensure that the initiatives are implemented in a manner that benefits all Nordic countries.

What is the most sought service in the Nordics and Sweden?

IQVIA can help support customers from molecule to market. We are not only the major CRO in the region, we are a human data science company that offers a unique portfolio of services and solutions. We can often have a very open-ended dialogue with our customers because they are at different stages, from clinical trials, commercial launch to loss of exclusivity. IQVIA has the data, technology and expertise to support the life science industry and healthcare market in all stages of the product lifecycle.

Do you see common trends in the challenges that your clients are facing in the Nordic environment?

Time is a challenge. Delays, as I pointed out about clinical trials, are a crucial aspect. We need to ensure that we can work faster. At the end of every timeline, there is a customer waiting for a new advanced innovative solution and patients who may be missing benefits.

From many of our interviewees in Sweden, they all commented that the quality of the amount of data contained in the registries is unmatched by most countries. How does that help you in your business?

The quality of the data is good, but I believe the structure could be more standardized because the 100+ quality registries we have in Sweden have not been built up in a coordinated way. There is an opportunity to make the next generation of quality registries even better because we can ensure that we can help automate the information feeding into the registries. Today, the registries are often fed by manual interactions, with nurses typically completing this work. This can be done in a much smarter way. We can use natural language processing (NLP) to also understand the unstructured information because itâ??s sometimes missed. The valuable content is often a combination of structured and unstructured information.

Jenni Nordborg from the Life Sciences Office highlighted Swedenâ??s ambition to become a front-runner in the new generation of precision medicine. What is needed to accomplish that objective?

We must work with real-world data, understanding that to be able to deliver precision medicine, we need to have close interaction between healthcare providers, industry and academia. Patients will have an increasing role in the ecosystem to develop better and smarter treatments. Itâ??s the patients who can inform about adverse effects or symptoms. We recently launched the IQVIA patient portal which is a step we are taking to support patients, involving them in the process. We know that up to 60 percent of patients are not compliant with their medication, so, how should precision medicine be evaluated when we know that most of them are not compliant? A patient-centric retention strategy is more critical than ever to the success of every clinical trial. The entire healthcare information chain needs to be brought together; itâ??s not just about big data, AI, real-world data, it is also about the patient and the interaction with them. With this platform, we will be able to manage and recruit patients to studies.

There are many competitors in the CRO and consulting fields, how does IQVIA differentiate in the Nordics?

We have competitors in each domain. However, being a human data science company enables us to not just sub-automate a part of the process but also take ownership and become a trusted partner and advisor in a more holistic way. What we do in our early engagement often has an impact further down the line in their launch of a new medicine, for example.

What is your vision for IQVIA in the next three to five years?

To be instrumental in improving the healthcare and life sciences environment in the Nordics. We will help companies, the government and policymakers to ensure Sweden is an attractive region. Which will benefit Sweden, both the life sciences communities and patients. We have a window of opportunity and now itâ??s about bringing together the companies that can be instrumental in the change. IQVIA has the capabilities required to make these changes, the accountability to implement change and release some of the barriers of communication.

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