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# "Takeda's business strategy is centered around innovation": Gordon Cameron

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**Priyanka Bajpai of BioSpectrum Asia spoke to Mr. Gordon Cameron on the company's solutions and strategies as well as the current trends that are driving the pharma industry.**



Gordon Cameron, Vice President, Asia-Pacific Area, Emerging Markets, Takeda Pharmaceuticals International has a strong understanding of both the developmental and commercial aspects of the healthcare industry. Mr. Cameron became Vice President of Asia-Pacific Area, Emerging Markets for Takeda in January 2015. Since joining Takeda in June 2009, he has held the positions of Head of Pipeline Opportunities and Launch, and Head of South Asia.

Takeda is a Japanese company, with a 235-year-old rich heritage. As Takeda has gone through enormous globalization in the last 10 years, it has also become quite nimble in responding to opportunities and challenges. Priyanka Bajpai of BioSpectrum Asia spoke to Mr. Gordon Cameron on the company's solutions and strategies as well as the current trends that are driving the pharma industry.

**Q. We'd like to begin with you sharing Takeda's presence and plans in the Asia Pacific region.**

**Gordon:** Takeda's business strategy is centered around innovation. From a globalization perspective, we have made some acquisitions in recent years, giving us a footprint that spans across the world. In Asia- Pacific specifically, we have evolved and expanded as well and are now present in 10 countries. While we have been present in some countries like Taiwan for over 50 years, in some others like Vietnam we have entered in the last few years.

We need to be very dynamic in the current business landscape. Our leadership understands emerging markets very well. It is a long-term play: we have to be patient, ride out the ups and downs, and just keep investing as per our strategy. Our aim is to bring to patients as many of our innovative therapies as we possibly can, keeping in mind the diversity of the different healthcare systems in the region.

**Q. Any industry trends that are driving the above choices and decisions?**

**Gordon:** Globally, there are a few major trends that are influencing our choices. One of them is related to lifestyle and demographic change – around aging populations, lack of exercise or lifestyle type of diseases. All this is increasing the healthcare burden.

In Asia- Pacific specifically, another trend that we are observing is related to governments trying to provide universal healthcare schemes to its populations. While there are more established schemes in countries such as Australia, Taiwan, Korea, countries such as Indonesia and Thailand are now trying to emulate these examples and provide their citizens with access to high quality healthcare. However, they are often limited by budgets as well as infrastructure. This certainly adds to the complexity of the problem, given that governments have to make hard choices around how much they provide for services, including provision for medicine, etc.

In order to succeed in this environment, our strategy needs to be country- specific and aim at increasing the reach of Takeda's innovative therapies for as many patients as possible.

**Q. You briefly mentioned about lifestyle and demographic changes in the world population. How do you see that influencing this focus in the short to medium term?**

**Gordon:** At Takeda, we are focused on the long-term and will continue to operate in areas where we think we can bring the highest differentiation, innovation for us in Asia Pacific, these are in the areas of Oncology and GI.

**Q. Coming back to APAC region and Emerging Markets in general, what is Takeda's market view and strategy for countries like Malaysia, Thailand, India?**

**Gordon:** For the 10 countries in Asia Pacific that we operate in, what is interesting is that they all have very different business landscapes and market challenges. Some are wealthier countries like Singapore and Australia. Others are emerging countries like Vietnam and Philippines. At Takeda, we tailor our approach for every country very carefully.

In Australia, we focus purely on our specialty business. The products that we have there are specialty Oncology and GI. We have therefore built capabilities, hired personnel who have expertise - such as medics, who help us find the best way to get our innovative therapies to patients.

This is a very different model from what we focus on in the Philippines, where the most pressing issues are very different. For instance, it may be harder for Filipinos to get diagnosed in the first, and as far as specialty products go – some very specific / unique tests have to be conducted but are not widely available. While our focus is on expanding our GI and Oncology presence in the Philippines, we are also investing in solutions that help patients get diagnosed and continue to look for ways to better address their healthcare needs. In the Philippines, we also have a patient assistance program, given that there is no universal access like Australia, where an independent third party helps determine the affordability of medicines for families and accordingly aids in dispensing these innovative medicines to patients in need.

**Q. With respect to the pharma industry, there appears to be a general shift towards how business will be conducted in the future. How is Takeda responding to such opportunities and change, and what are some of the challenges it faces in adopting to it?**

**Gordon:** It probably comes down to this concept about innovation and change, which we have briefly talked about earlier with respect to our portfolio.

Innovation is similarly reflected in the way we approach R&D. We have moved from being a relatively inward focused R&D organization, to having services provided by outsiders. This allows us to focus and invest in newer technologies that are important for the future. In addition, we have externalized significantly. In last 2-3 years, we have partnered with over 54 organizations. This is a huge commitment to our scientists, in that they now have access to knowledge from universities and other organizations. And in a similar manner, we have also created an open platform for outsiders to come and collaborate with us at own our R&D center, the Shonan Health Innovation Park – a very modern and significantly sized capacity. To specifically note, all of these initiatives continue to keep our expertise and strategy in focus – which is in Oncology, GI and Neuroscience.

Other parts of Takeda such as Supply Chain are also innovating. Our in-house manufacturing often focuses on innovative biologics while we work with partners externally, on contract manufacturing and operations. We are able to balance by focusing on where we think our expertise is and strategically where we are headed in the future.

Additionally, from our perspective, we also need to be innovative and keep changing in order to meet any cost challenges. At Takeda, we are therefore always looking for ways and uses of technology to drive efficiencies – such as, innovative digital multi-channel marketing solutions, or actively exploring solutions that aide in better communication with our subscribers so that we can increase the outreach of our message and make it more effective.