

“We have 30 major launches planned this year”

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In a chat with BioSpectrum Asia, Ai Hua talks about her achievements and the future plans for the company.



Ong Ai Hua, Company Group Chairman (CGC) of Janssen Asia Pacific, began her career at Johnson & Johnson 28 years ago and has held leadership roles across strategic marketing, sales management, and licensing and acquisition. In her current role, she oversees operations that deliver pharmaceutical innovation in Australia, China, Hong Kong, India, Japan, Korea, New Zealand and Taiwan. In her previous role as President of One J&J Southeast Asia, Ai Hua was instrumental in the successful implementation of Johnson & Johnson’s first-ever one-company enterprise business model encompassing pharmaceuticals, consumer products and medical devices. She nurtured a business with strong growth and enhanced efficiency across 10 countries the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). She is one of the few female leaders in the pharmaceutical industry to date. Having had the opportunity to work with various leaders during her career, Ai Hua is also committed to mentoring and developing leaders of the future. In a chat with BioSpectrum Asia, Ai Hua talks about her achievements and the future plans for the company.

Edited Excerpts

What are your basic duties and key focus areas as the Group Chairman at Janssen Asia Pacific?

As Company Group Chairman of the Janssen Pharmaceutical Companies of Johnson & Johnson in Asia Pacific, I oversee a rapidly growing business in one of the most dynamic and diverse regions in the world. My focus is on ensuring our 7,000-strong team located in eight markets works as one to deliver on Our Promise. This is our global statement of who we are as Janssen and calls all team members to work towards 'creating a future where disease is a thing of the past'. In order to deliver on Our Promise, I'm focused on overcoming the challenges to timely and affordable access to innovative medicines. Whether operating in reimbursed or userpay markets, we are focused on getting our medicines to patients in need. To deliver on this commitment and ensure long-term success, I am focused on nurturing a diverse and inclusive workforce. Our workforce includes people differing in age and ethnicity, expertise and experience from inside and outside the pharmaceutical sector in order to harness unique perspectives.

What major business changes have you brought about under your leadership at Janssen Asia Pacific?

In 2018, I introduced a new way of thinking and acting that has helped galvanize our diverse region. We call this our Win One, Win All strategy. This new approach places responsibility on every individual, every team, every function and every operating company to win in their respective markets and area of focus, because when one of us wins, we all win. Importantly, it calls on us to win for patients today – our immediate opportunity; while investing for tomorrow's patients – our longer term strategy. I have also championed agility as the critical ingredient to navigating healthcare reform and evolving policy environments in markets like China and Japan. Of course, I continue to advocate for investment in Asia Pacific and act as a trusted interface for our global leaders on this dynamic region.

With over 25 years of experience, what are your views on the growth of the Pharma industry in the Asia Pacific region?

An ageing population, a rise in non-communicable disease, a burgeoning middle-class and increasing demand for quality healthcare are drivers for growth in Asia Pacific. That said, we face stagnant drug budgets in many markets and need to better articulate the value of pharmaceutical innovation. Companies must also look to the future and maintain a pipeline of innovative medicines that will truly contribute to better patients' outcomes and can be commercialized at speed. At Janssen, we are collaborating with external scientists, researchers and entrepreneurs, alongside our own R&D teams. This focus inspired JLABS – dedicated precincts that connect Johnson & Johnson Innovation with the entrepreneurial R&D community. These JLABS have only operated in North America and Europe, but that changed last month when we launched Asia Pacific's first JLABS in Shanghai – our largest JLABS facility worldwide, accommodating up to 50 life sciences and healthcare start-ups.

What are the basic challenges facing the Pharma industry in the Asia Pacific region today, and how can those be addressed?

Regionwide, the number one challenge is timely and affordable access to innovative medicine. We are addressing this through efforts to accelerate regulatory approval in order to deliver zero-gap with the US and Europe. We are also exploring and testing new access models that will lessen the time from registration to funded access. We are also pursuing strategic partnerships that increase our ability to deliver medicines to more patients, in a quicker timeframe. In Japan, we collaborate with Mitsubishi Tanabe, Mochida Pharmaceutical and Taiho Pharmaceutical to improve access to several of our medicines. Of course, we face increased competition, not just from multinationals but through the rise of Chinese biotechnology innovators; rising operating costs; increasing complexities in regulatory environment; and strong competition for talent. The solution to these challenges lies in our ability to accelerate innovation and expand access while advocating the value of our medicines. Our high-performing team is up to the challenge and is working to shape the access environment to innovative medicines, deliver superior customer engagement and become a scientific partner of choice.

What are the major plans in store for 2019 at Janssen Asia Pacific? Are there any new announcements or launches in the pipeline?

2019 is a big year for Janssen in Asia Pacific. First and foremost, our medicines will be used by more than 60 million people. We are focused on increasing this impact, with 30 major launches planned, each with the ability to set new standards in care. A great example is the recent launch in Japan of our new medicine that helps men with prostate cancer that continues to grow despite treatment with hormone therapy. In China, we are focused on adding as many of our innovative medicines to the National Reimbursement Drug List. This is paramount to securing access for patients, with our immediate focus on psoriasis, rheumatoid arthritis, inflammatory bowel disease, and a number of cancer types.