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70 percent of healthcare decisions are influenced by diagnostic results, yet we spend just 2.5 percent of our healthcare budget on them

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Randy Pritchard, General Manager and Senior Vice President of Clinical Operations for North America at bioMérieux, a global leader in in vitro diagnostics, speaks about the outsized strategic weight of the North American market, which accounts for nearly half of the company's global revenue and a third of its workforce. Pritchard goes on to outline the scale of the antimicrobial resistance and sepsis crisis in the US and the role diagnostics must play in addressing it. He also shares his perspective on the company's lineage going back to the teachings of Louis Pasteur and what family ownership brings to bioMérieux's culture and long-term strategy.

Having spent decades in diagnostics with some recent CEO experience, what drew you to bioMérieux?

When you've spent 25-plus years in the in vitro diagnostics and medical device world, you get to know who the great competitors are, and bioMérieux has always had an incredibly strong presence across multiple categories. They have great people and some of my best former colleagues at other companies had come from bioMérieux. Plus, their incredible senior leadership team. Alexandre Mérieux, our chairman, is still actively involved, and Pierre Boulud, our CEO, is an incredibly talented, passionate, and visionary person. Great people to work for and a great team I

get to work with is always a strong start.

Most importantly, bioMérieux is a company that's really committed to a broad mission of improving health on a global scale. Most of us in healthcare come to this industry because it's a job where you get to make a difference in the lives of millions of people, and we certainly do that in the critical areas we touch at bioMérieux. From clinical microbiology to infectious disease, we tackle the areas that matter most in the world right now.

One of my previous roles was chairman of the board of GenomeKey, and bioMérieux bought one of our direct competitors. That told me this is a visionary company looking far into the future and thinking hard about the impact DNA sequencing is going to have. All of those things combined made saying yes to joining the company very easy.

How would you describe bioMérieux's presence in North America, and what makes the region such a defining strategic market for the company?

It starts with scale. North America is a defining part of the bioMérieux family. We have more than 6,000 employees in the region, about a third of our global workforce, and generate more than USD 2 billion in revenue here. That is nearly half of the company's total global revenue. Furthermore, 75 percent of bioMérieux's global products are manufactured at sites across North America.

We also lead innovation from here. Eight sites in the US, including six R&D centers of excellence, anchor our leadership across key therapeutic areas like microbiology, molecular diagnostics, and blood culture.

Our M&A activity backs that up. All three of our major acquisitions over the last decade were North American companies. Our contribution here goes well beyond revenue as the products, growth, and much of the innovation driving the company's future direction have come out of North America.

What are bioMérieux's core therapeutic and business areas in North America, and what does that focus reflect about where diagnostics as a whole is heading?

Our core categories are infectious disease and microbiology. As pathogens have a growing impact, we bring technologies into that space to help improve patients' lives.

We’re a world leader in molecular testing, particularly at the point of care, along with microbiology and blood culture. For patients in a critical care setting, we need to be able to understand quickly if there is an infection, what it is, and most importantly, how to treat it so that we can get that patient on the road to a better life. In an outpatient or acute setting, it’s about giving clinicians the information they need to make the right treatment call, including whether antibiotics are appropriate. Antimicrobial resistance (AMR) is a big focus for bioMérieux, and diagnostics play a huge role in fighting it.

Beyond the clinical space, bioMérieux takes those same technologies and applies them elsewhere through our industrial business. We’re a critical player in securing both the food supply and the pharmaceutical supply chain. We help food producers ensure quality and safety and pharmaceutical companies verify the purity of their inputs and the safety of what they deliver.

The current Cyclospora outbreak in the US is a great example of the real-life importance of the evolving nature of the work we do. We’ve had multiple conversations with key organization like the CDC where we’ve shown our data on where outbreaks are happening in real time. The critical piece in diagnostics is not just generating data but turning that data into information, whether that’s for a clinician making an acute decision or for healthcare and policy leaders deciding what needs to happen at the macro level.

What role does diagnostics play in the evolution toward precision medicine?

Precision medicine means getting the exact compound to the right patient, at the right time, and at the right dose. Answering those questions requires excellent data, and that’s exactly where diagnostics comes in.

I’ve worked for the largest diagnostics companies in the world and for startups focused purely on precision medicine in the cancer space, but what I focus on every day now is the incredibly dangerous problem of AMR. These bugs continue to evolve, partly because of prescribing habits, so we need our therapeutics to stay effective against them. When we can give a doctor a clear answer about what’s going on in a patient, that doctor can confidently make the best decision.

As a parent, there’s nothing worse than having a sick child and wanting everything possible done for them. However, a clinician being able to clearly explain if an illness is caused by a virus and that antibiotics won’t help, matters for treatment and combatting AMR.

That clarity comes from turning data into information and a lot of that now happens through algorithms. But algorithms are only as good as the data behind them. If you don't start with clean, high-quality data, the algorithm won't be as effective as it could be. That matters even more as we move into the next wave of biologics and cell and gene therapies injected directly into the body, where the purity of the inputs is critical to the purity of the outputs.

Beyond, selection and implementation of therapy, diagnostics also plays a critical role across the supply chain through manufacturing. All roads lead to powerful diagnostics being an incredible source of value for the healthcare system as a whole.

Where do you feel AMR sits within US healthcare priorities today? Is it sufficiently recognized as a priority area, with the level of attention it needs to combat the risks?

As the global leader in microbiology testing, we invest significantly across that entire value chain so we can create dialogue with stakeholders and provide answers that help move things forward. We continue to make progress but there's certainly a lot more work to be done.

When you dig into the impact of AMR, the numbers are stark. We partnered with the Office of Health Economics on a study that found sepsis is associated with 21 million deaths globally each year. In the US alone, there are 350,000 deaths or discharges to hospice annually, roughly a third of all hospital-based deaths. Conventional diagnostics can still take days to deliver answers, which forces high-stakes decisions early in the process before there's enough data. That leads to inappropriate therapy in as many as one in five patients as a starting point. Better use of diagnostics could prevent tens of thousands of deaths a year.

If current trends continue, sepsis, a life-threatening medical emergency caused by the body's overactive response to an existing infection, is projected to overtake cancer as the leading cause of death by the middle of this century. That's how big the problem is. So the real question is what we're doing about it at the policy level.

There are clear ways to save lives and save money at the same time, and that's where investment in diagnostics comes in. 70 percent of all healthcare decisions are made on the basis of a diagnostic test result, yet diagnostics account for a little over two and a half percent of US healthcare spending. There's no better ROI in healthcare than that. However, current policy isn't capturing that value. Healthcare costs are rising exponentially and have now reached USD 5.3 trillion in the most recent data. Spending has gone up about seven percent for two years running,

while outcomes aren’t improving at the same pace. That goes to show we have to change how we invest.

There’s been good progress at the FDA on approval processes for clearing innovative treatments and technologies, but we need that progress to continue so life-saving tests can get to market. Not just for AMR and sepsis but across the full continuum of care, including antibiotic stewardship. Diagnostics has to be at the core of how we address these challenges. That includes payment policy so clinicians and the broader healthcare system get paid fairly and can keep funding the innovation that gets us there. If we reach 2050 having kept sepsis from becoming the leading cause of death, that will be a defining moment.

The proposed PASTEUR (Pioneering Antimicrobial Subscriptions To End Upsurging Resistance) Act is a good indication of growing attention to AMR, but does it close the gap you mentioned around bringing diagnostics fully to the table in that fight?

The PASTEUR Act is a great first step. It does mention diagnostics and the role we play, but there’s more language, understanding, and action needed specifically on the diagnostics front. Still, we’re supportive as this bill moves forward.

All stakeholders from regulators to policy makers and healthcare professionals, need a clearer understanding of where diagnostics fits within that continuum. In the meantime, we will keep bringing new tools to market to stay ahead of how quickly antimicrobial resistance progresses.

We’re also excited to work more closely with our pharma colleagues across the industry to have a real, positive impact on slowing resistance patterns and improving outcomes for patients. bioMérieux is a company that traces our lineage back to Louis Pasteur himself. The founding member of the Mérieux family was a direct student of his in Lyon, so we’re proud to carry that legacy forward.

Earlier you mentioned bioMérieux’s three previous acquisitions being here in the US. What does that reflect for the country as a scouting ground for the next era of the company’s business development and strategy?

Our last three major acquisitions all came from right here in the US. Accellix this year, Day Zero Diagnostics in 2025, and Specific Diagnostics in 2022. Having the most cutting-edge, innovative

technologies to build customer solutions is critical for us, and we're continuing to look at other ways to have an impact with a lot of that happening right here in the US.

We also invest 12 percent of our top-line revenue back into R&D, which is significantly higher than almost anyone else in this industry. Ongoing innovation is critical for us, and manufacturing much of it here in the US and North America gives us strong access to world-leading partners in the provider space.

Our centers of excellence play a critical role in shaping where we go next, what we need to be thinking about, and what innovation we need to pay attention to as a company. Being a commercial leader in molecular, microbiology, and blood culture also gives us the scale to partner with the world's leading thought leaders and have a real impact.

What are your top priorities for bioMérieux in North America over the next two to three years, and how does that reflect the broader strategy of the organization?

I believe we'll continue to be successful as a company if we stay close to our customers. This means understanding the challenges they're facing and listening well to what they need. That's what drives what's next for us and what will determine how we get there.

It comes down to building an organization tightly linked to our customers and the patients they serve. Do we know them? Do we understand what they need? Beyond that, it's also about great execution. Having the right people and resources in the right place to stay connected, and the internal processes to make sure we're truly listening. If we do those things well, we'll keep living our goal of helping make the world a healthier place.

What are the benefits of being part of a family-owned company when it comes to setting strategy and how does that background differentiate bioMérieux?

This is the second family-owned company I've worked for. When you work for a company knowing the people who it's named after are there working alongside you, it makes everything more personal and more real. This helps each of us link back to bioMérieux's mission acutely. Making the world a healthier place isn't just a slogan here. With two generations of family leadership who are actively involved in managing the company, and strong leadership across the globe and here in the US, that makes all of us stewards of the brand and the vision. It's an incredibly mission-driven

organization from top to bottom, no matter who you talk to.

As a company, we're in an industry-leading position today. But we also make important decisions on a much longer-term scale than a lot of publicly held companies. We have the ability to make the decisions that will let us stay at the head of the industry even ten years from now. That commitment to long-term innovation and impact from the very top of the family is a demonstrable part of bioMérieux's success over the years.

What final message would you like to leave on behalf of bioMérieux?

Diagnostics is the single best value in healthcare. 70 percent of healthcare decisions are influenced by diagnostic results, yet we spend just about two and a half percent of our healthcare budget on them. That's an incredible return on investment, and it's still undervalued across the industry.

That undervaluation is where we, as an industry, need to keep working to make the case. Diagnostics has to be part of the solution to some of our biggest healthcare challenges, like AMR. We can't make an impact on AMR if we don't know what bugs we're treating, how they're evolving, and whether we're giving drug developers enough information to target them and confirm the treatment worked.

Finally, at bioMérieux we come to work every day looking to make the world a healthier place, and diagnostics has the ability to make an impact across the entire healthcare spectrum. It's an area we should be investing in because the societal outcomes are significant.

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