Interview with Lorena Malpica, Managing Director, COEBIO

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Bioethics encompasses a wide range of disciplines in health care, health science and health policy. Ethical standards apply at all levels inside the company and outside with the stakeholders. Could you give us your definition of bioethics applied to the healthcare sector?

Van Rensselaer Potter, in 1970 coined the term Bioethics to describe a new philosophy that sought to integrate Biology, Ecology, Medicine and also human values. In his most famous book – Bioethics a Bridge to the Future, he wrote that it is essential to create a bridge between Science, Ethics and human values. Applied to the Healthcare sector, I would define Bioethics as the systematic study that regulates human conduct in medicine and human life, respecting dignity and integrity of all humans.

You have founded your company many years ago. Which potential did you see for bioethics services at that time?

Bioethics is a relatively new discipline that has been evolving with the need to evaluate ethical and legal implications of new science developments affecting human life.
In the last few years however, those developments have accelerated, placing Bioethics in the spotlight and creating a wide range of opportunities for the services the discipline provides, not only in the healthcare sector but in many others.
For the future, I am very optimistic about the potential of services related to Bioethics as well as for improving the values of our global world.

Your company provides courses and training to tackle leadership, anticorruption practices, and sustainable development to name a few. How do companies in the healthcare sector respond to these training initiatives – and which incentives do healthcare companies have, to follow these courses?

Although we are at the initial stage of attributing a formal certification requirement called "Distinction" to companies, healthcare related companies have been very receptive to our offer. The value of our distinction program encompasses different criteria. First, it grants the assurance to be acting in accordance with national and international regulations related to Bioethical matters. Second, we believe to be pioneers in obtaining a unique distinction that ratifies the company's concern with ethics and values related to the human life. It is important to mention that we have recently signed a collaboration agreement with the Bioethics and Human Rights Chairman from the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural (UNESCO) – Alberto Garcia Gomez. Finally, our distinction program improves reputation and loyalty among the stakeholders.

Globally, large multinational companies as well as smaller companies are trying to convey an image of transparency. How well has the healthcare sector achieved that in Mexico?

Our board member, Mr. Luis F. Ortiz from OCA law firm has had personal and professional contact with this sector as legal advisor and instructor. He is convinced that the health sector has done a quite interesting effort to achieve more transparency.
First, corporations have fired their entire sales team and hired fresh young labor task force in order to improve their policies. Others have engaged in a compliance certification with the Mexican regulatory law system (i.e. labeling), and reanalyzed their supply chain for their life sciences area seeking for unordinary conducts. In addition, companies have invested quite a lot of time and money in training and cutting off intermediaries.

A risk assessment also brought to the table good ideas on possible solutions to avoid mismanagement in the entire supply chain and full compliance with federal law. Today, relationships with hospitals and doctors are no longer done by lower tiers of sales team. Finally, companies have been subscribing to abide to the Ethics Transparency Council of the Pharmaceutical's Industry codes of ethics and practice standards, so as to comply with the law's provisions.

Mexico has earned a reputation for corruption, pervasive in government and business alike, despite efforts by both to eradicate it. How serious is corruption in Mexico, and how can you help companies improve their practices?

Indeed, corruption is a challenge and a factor for growth and competitiveness in Mexico. Fortunately, the NGO named Transparency International has raised Mexico´s grade after three years in a row of unfortunate decreases. Even though many factors have contributed to this raise,

inside Mexico's index of corruption, recent bribery cases like Walmart and Orthofix are a perfect example of Mexico's lack of regulation. The work of non-profit lawyer associations like ANADE and anti-corruption Committees have alerted multinationals to strengthen their anti-bribery policies and comply with FCPA and UK-Bribery Act.

COEBIO has joined forces with OCA law firm and Mr. Luis F. Ortiz to provide high-end-target training to local and multinational companies. There have been many successful cases that have caught the attention of international brands (including in the healthcare industry) which may deploy an expansion project for us in the United States and Latin America during 2013-2014. Our courses involve different types of training in various areas such as – anticorruption, living the ethics, leadership, risk management, anti-bribery, FCPA, UK-Bribery Acts, and of course Bioethics applied to the company. Once the company has filed their corporate documents and achieved the binding training sessions, it will qualify for the Bioethical Responsible Corporation, which is a distinctive certification granted by COEBIO.

What message would you like to convey to companies in the healthcare sector?

Companies in the Healthcare sector lead the way in the evolution of society. If they manage to harmonize scientific evolution with a commitment to life, health, values and the environment, they will attain business recognition and continuity.

You are the founder of Coebio and you have a Master's degree and a PHD in Bioethics from Anahuac University in Mexico City. What do you want to achieve in the next five years?

My personal objective is to consolidate COEBIO's Distinction project by expanding beyond the Healthcare sector, and reaching out to many other sectors affecting the human life. Bioethics is at the source and covers all aspects of life, which is why companies must be part of our initiative to embrace their human potential and be conscious about their actions towards the community. I am convinced that through bioethics, we can contribute to improve the way our society functions.

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