Interview: Michael Cobas Meyer – General Manager, Eli Lilly Switzerland



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Michael Cobas Meyer of Eli Lilly Switzerland reveals how these

are very exciting times for the company, particularly given an extremely rich pipeline in the areas of diabetes, oncology and bio-medicines; how the challenge will be to transition from their existing portfolio to new products; and why Lilly´s focus is always on improving patient outcomes, with integrity as a core value.

You took over as general manager of Lilly´s Swiss affiliate a few months ago, during what is an extremely exciting time for the company globally as David Ricks will be transitioning into his new position as CEO by the new year. What mandate were you set when it comes to developing Lilly´s business in Switzerland?

These are very exciting times for Lilly, particularly given our extremely rich pipeline. My mandate is to transition from our existing portfolio to our new products. We have an exciting array of treatments that we are looking to launch in our three business units being diabetes, oncology and bio-medicines, the latter where the focus is on immunology and neurodegeneration. We retain our commitment to research and innovation. I attach a great deal of importance to attracting and retaining the best people. This goes beyond commercial operations, and includes our research activities. In Switzerland, Lilly has an excellent talent base of just over 70 people, allowing us to compete with the largest multinational companies in the country. Globally, Lilly employs some of the leading scientists in the world. We believe in the concept of exceptional leadership, allowing

our employees to self-develop and to engage. The more engaged an employee is in their work, the better their services will ultimately be for HCPs and their patients.

Our outgoing CEO, Dr. John Lechleiter, has always stressed his commitment to providing the best working environment for employees. He is seen as a researcher who then became our CEO, as well as an empathetic leader that connects well with people. It is such an approach that has allowed Lilly to surpass the expectations of the investment community over the years. Exceptional leadership is what allows you to build trustworthy relationships, and provide value-added services for society.

Talking about relationships, Switzerland's relationship to Europe is arguably at a critical juncture. What role can the pharmaceutical industry play in shaping this debate?

I strongly believe in the concept of Europe. In a period of globalization, we are witnessing the rise of nationalism, and questions around Switzerland´s relationship with the European Union (EU). From our industry perspective, it is important to defend the good relationship CH has with the EU and in particular the legal framework which is in place through bilateral agreements. The Swiss pharmaceutical industry has an important role to play in being more vocal about the importance of retaining our close trading and cultural relationship with the EU. An inclusive leadership style, like we have at Lilly, is crucial to reassure people around the benefits of immigration and a diverse workforce.

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Not being part of the EU, we always look at Switzerland separately when it comes to drug development and product launches, as it has its own regulatory agency in Swissmedic. The Swiss agency for the authorisation and supervision of therapeutic products can present different timelines and some additional questions not being asked by other regulatory bodies like the FDA and EMA. This isn't a negative in itself, but it creates uncertainties that we have to account for.

In July 2016 the company announced excellent second quarter results full-year results – reporting a 9 percent increase in turnover to USD 5.405 billion. Has this global trend been reflected at the local level in Switzerland?

Regarding product life-cycles and product launches, Lilly Switzerland has its own timelines. For example, we may have submitted new product applications to Swissmedic after FDA or EMA filing. Our products here in CH may still have exclusivity status whereas in other countries we may have lost exclusivity. On the other hand some of our pipeline products may have been approved

elsewhere but may be still under regulatory review here in Switzerland. This makes it difficult to answer your question directly. From a commercial perspective, Switzerland is an important market for Lilly. Today we conduct parallel submission for our new products across the different markets where we are active including CH. Finally, we did successfully launch new products in Oncology and Diabetes recently beyond our successful marketed products in these therapeutic areas. We do continue to successfully promote our established products in for example Men's health, Bone, and CNS. So yes, 2016 so far has been a good year for patients and us as a company.

As you mentioned, Lilly is in midst of one of the most productive periods of new product launches in the company's history. What particular products will drive Lilly Switzerland's growth in the future?

Our new products will be essential to the continued success of our business. And we are indeed proud of our pipeline. We are focusing our research in 5 therapeutic areas: Diabetes, Oncology, Immunology, Neurodegeneration and Pain. With that we are hoping to bring new therapeutic options for patients with devastating diseases. Psoriasis, psoriatic arthritis, rheumatoid Arthritis, and Alzheimer's disease are just some new disease areas for us and we are looking forward to advance our pipeline also in these new areas.

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In the field of immuno-oncology, we have a global alliance with Merck Sharp & Dohme to evaluate new molecules in this therapeutic area. Such strategic collaborations reinforce Lilly´s commitment to bringing new treatments to the forefront for people with cancer. With the acquisition of ImClone Systems in 2009 for USD 6.5 billion, we obtained good people, some exceptional knowledge, and the pipeline. It is then up to us to build upon such knowledge. It's in Lilly's Credo to take what we have, and continuously work to make it better; in other words, quality by design. This strategic combination has helped to create one of the leading oncology franchises in the biopharmaceutical industry, broadening Lilly's portfolio of marketed cancer therapies and boosting Lilly's oncology pipeline.

On a more personal level, this is your first posting as a general manager, having had an extensive career with Lilly, responsible for different areas of the business, from sales in the men's health portfolio to global brand development leader. How different is it to be responsible for operations across an entire country?

I have indeed had the opportunity to work on a number of different areas with Lilly, and this is another new experience. Obviously, I can build upon my past experiences. But more importantly, I

have to learn what I do not know. Hence, the key issue to consider is how much you lead versus how much you listen. Fortunately, Lilly Switzerland is an exceptionally well run affiliate, with a good mix of both experienced people, as well as a number of fresh talent. My priority is to ensure that all of our employees are focused and know their priorities. Sharing a common vision and living our culture and values is key to this. I set the guard rails, clarify the big picture, and once you have engaged your people, you can allow them to flourish independently.

What is your five year vision for Lilly in Switzerland?

Lilly´s focus is always to improve patient outcomes. Integrity is one of our core values; there is no business without integrity. We are honest in our dealings with customers, employees, shareholders, partners, suppliers, competitors, and the community. I do see a great opportunity for Lilly Switzerland to grow. The challenge now is to integrate our in-line products, which still contribute significantly in revenue terms, with our exciting new portfolio and pipeline. Over the coming years, obtaining total revenues of USD 100 million for the affiliate, including our oncology and diabetes business units, would be a real success story. I am convinced that we have the right people and the right medicines to make it happen, always looking at improving patient outcomes. It is now up to us to live up to our expectations to become the trustworthy partner of physicians, payers and patients, at both the global and local level.

What is it that you most appreciate about working for Lilly? What is it that keeps you motivated every day?

Dr. John Lechleiter once said what we have is a noble mission, serving patients. If contributing to human health in the 21st century does not excite you, then this industry is not for you. People are attracted to work for Lilly because of our values. I have stayed with Lilly because we truly live our values. This year we are commemorating our 140th anniversary. Over 14 decades, the organization has contributed more than 100 medicines and significant medical advances. Lilly is committed to making life better by lending expertise and partnering with organizations around the world to help ease pressing global health problems. The other aspect that attracts me to Lilly is our emphasis on hiring internally, continuously developing our people. Our curiosity and commitment to science is key to our business. From a business perspective, we do not focus on continuous mergers and acquisitions, but on creating value in healthcare ecosystems through our scientific rigor and a desire to constantly improve.

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