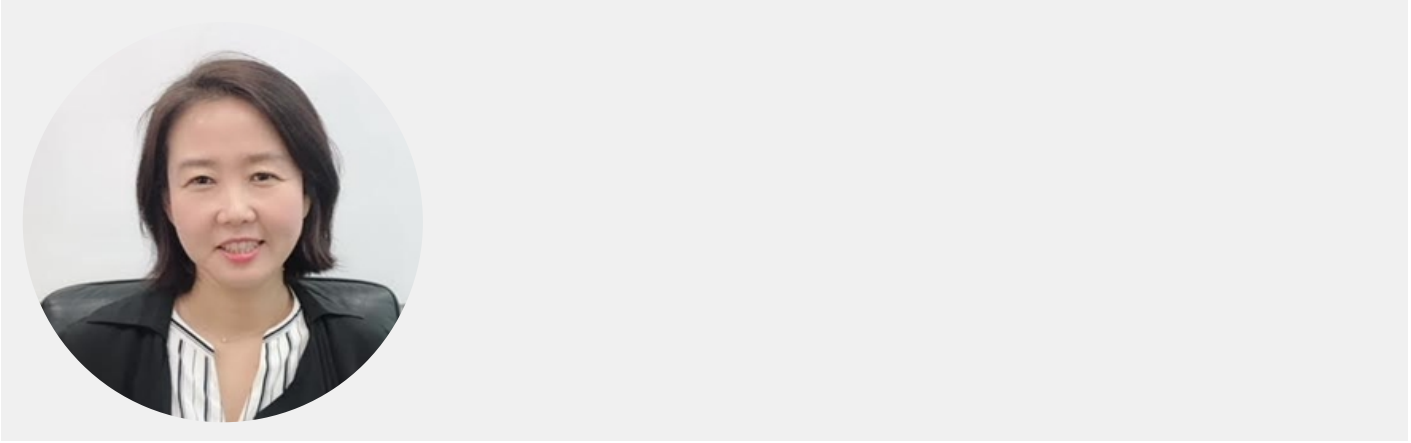
Hye-ja Kim – Hong Kong and Macau Lead, Pfizer Pharmaceutical Innovative Health



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Hye-ja Kim, Pfizer Pharmaceutical Innovative Health (Hong Kong and Macau Lead), shares how Pfizer's global achievements in 2017 are reflected within the Hong Kong affiliate, the innovative solutions they can offer Hong Kong patients, government and other healthcare stakeholders beyond just a drug, and their continued commitment to extending their category leadership across their impressive 'from head to toe, from prevention to treatment' portfolio.

Hye-ja, you have headed Pfizer Innovative Health in Hong Kong and Macau for almost two years now since September 2016. 2017 was a very good year for Pfizer globally with revenues growth despite some LOEs, with more launches this year than any other year in the past decade. How has the Hong Kong affiliate performed?

Our strategy globally is to focus on patients and put them first. Patient-centricity is at the core of our decision-making. From an R&D perspective, we prioritize where we see clear unmet medical needs. From the perspective of the local affiliate, this means providing patients with access to the global portfolio of products as early as possible.

Pfizer Innovative Health (PIH) has performed well in Hong Kong. In early 2017, we launched Ibrance®, the first CDK4/6 inhibitor approved by the US FDA. We now have nearly 300 patients on this medication, which demonstrates its value to patients. What is also innovative is that we launched a risk-sharing program for this product, which helps to alleviate affordability issues. In

order to maximize patient access, we always work on providing innovative solutions. In addition, we are also working on disease awareness initiatives and promote early screening.

Another great launch was Prevenar 13®, the pneumococcal vaccine, which we extended to a new indication for all age population. With the aging population in Hong Kong, this was a clear unmet medical need, and in particular, to at-risk populations like patients with diabetes or cardiovascular disease. Another highlight associated with this product is that for the first time in Asia, we are collaborating with the government on a subsidy program for both public and private patients. This is a significant milestone to safeguard the elderly in Hong Kong given the private partnership.

I can also highlight our health management initiative as an example of our ‘putting patients first’ philosophy. Our mission is to find and fill any gap within the patient journey, from awareness, to diagnosis, seeking treatment and to being on treatment. This is a very long process, and we hope to take patients ‘from sick care to health care’ with self-management.

Ultimately, a pharmaceutical company works in a solution-based industry. It is not simply about giving patients a drug. At Pfizer, we believe that it is critical to consider the whole patient journey and we hope to provide assistance and support to them along that entire journey.

With market launch and access being a priority then, how do you assess the market access and regulatory environment in Hong Kong?

The Hong Kong government respects R&D and data-backed innovation. As we have many good products in our portfolio, our experience of the regulatory environment in Hong Kong is highly favorable. In addition, with the excellent healthcare infrastructure here and the public payer taking a very reasonable approach to new innovative drugs and solutions, we see the government as good partners. They do see the value of the innovation that we bring.

In addition, we respect the agenda they have put forth in terms of healthcare reform, particularly in areas like rare diseases and oncology, where they understand that patient access to innovation needs to be accelerated. We hope to continue to act as a good partner to government efforts in this regard and we believe we have the expertise and solutions to offer. For instance, by shifting patients from the public healthcare system to the private sector in order to relieve some of the burden on the public healthcare infrastructure in Hong Kong. We take a very proactive approach to engagement with government stakeholders.

Prior to your current role, you were responsible for Pfizer’s Rare Diseases portfolio. How do you leverage this expertise within your current role?

My past experience with this portfolio has helped me instinctively put patients first. Most of the time, you simply study the disease from textbooks, but I remember that I went to see some patients with hemophilia and it really stunned me when I arrived to see very young boys. At their age, they naturally are very active but they had to live with this condition that impacts their enjoyment and freedom. This really impacted me. Then you consider the feelings of their parents, who have just received the diagnosis and may not know anything about the condition or how to handle it. For instance, a treatment involves an injection but think about how a parent might feel if he or she has to stick a needle into their one-year-old boy? This experience really opened my eyes to the patient journey.

This is why I am glad that the Hong Kong government has a strong agenda on rare diseases and is listening closely to the patient voice. We partner very closely with them in order to offer solutions and our expertise.

Looking across Pfizer's extensive innovative portfolio in Hong Kong, where do you see the growth drivers then?

One of our strengths is that we have a very broad portfolio: from head to toe, as we say, and across prevention to late-stage disease.

In addition, Pfizer actively pursues category leadership. In that sense, I sometimes make the comparison to a department store: we may have a very large portfolio but we are highly specialized within each floor (i.e. specialty area)! To name some examples, from disease prevention, we have products like Prevenar 13® that has had nearly ten years of market leadership, and as mentioned, we are extending this further to the aged population. We also have Eliquis®, a novel oral anticoagulant – cardiovascular health has a significant impact on people's quality of life so this is an important franchise for us, and we also provide disease awareness initiatives. Even within oncology, we also offer smoking cessation aids to reduce cancer rates.

We also have a strong legacy pain portfolio with products like Celebrex® and Lyrica®. Pain has a huge negative impact on a person's quality of life, so similarly, we are also working raise disease awareness amongst society.

Not many people may know that pneumonia is the second killer in Hong Kong. We have a great portfolio here from prevention to powerful anti-infectives for treatment. Pfizer prides itself on offering these prevention-and-treatment combinations.

Looking forward, we have an extremely strong and innovative pipeline that we expect to bring to Hong Kong over the next few years, especially in oncology and rare diseases, so that is very exciting. We focus on pursuing opportunities in areas where we know we are extremely well-positioned with great insight into patient needs.

Within such a vibrant work environment, how do you build and retain a great team?

Besides working hard, which goes without saying, the corporate organization is very important. Everything we do is for the patient and society, so it is important to have experienced and committed teams. This builds trust and capabilities.

Pfizer values people and Pfizer Hong Kong has very strong leadership and a well-established affiliate. Hong Kong is also a regional hub for Pfizer so we have access to global opportunities and Hong Kong is seen as a gateway to a global career. This also means that we are able to showcase and share any best practices and capabilities within the region.

In addition, we offer a range of corporate development, trainee and pharmacy internship programs, from which many join as full-time colleagues, a testament to the success of these programs.

Pfizer stresses a strong ownership culture with our ‘OWNIT!’ corporate slogan. Internally, we work collaboratively and we contribute to the company from our areas of expertise, so this builds a strong sense of ownership and also engagement with our colleagues. Externally, we commit to learning from the patients as well as partnering with key stakeholders, so everyone in the organization needs to ‘OWNIT’ and be empowered to do that.

All these have contributed to a strong talent pipeline within Pfizer Hong Kong and in general, there is usually staff longevity within Pfizer affiliates globally. I myself have been with Pfizer for nearly ten years!

Do you have a final message for our international audience?

Hong Kong has very good healthcare infrastructure, renowned academics and world-class clinicians. Hong Kong can certainly play a role in contributing and driving Pfizer’s global R&D efforts, especially in therapeutic areas where we see higher prevalence in Asian populations.

We see that our efforts to closely collaborate with all stakeholders within Hong Kong have also made a big impact, bringing in some innovative solutions that have the potential to be exported as best practices within the region.

Globally, it is a very exciting time for Pfizer. We have a strong upcoming pipeline and we are continuing to pursue R&D opportunities that leverage our existing capabilities to extend our current category leadership across all our business segments. Our local role at the Hong Kong affiliate is to identify local medical needs and localize the global assets to these.

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