Christophe Lala – General Manager Western Europe, GE Healthcare



Digital transformation is not about the devices, but it starts with – and all comes down to – the people

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Christophe Lala, general manager of western Europe for GE Healthcare offers an overview of the current dynamics impacting the French healthcare landscape – namely a shift in structure around care pathways and the hot trend of digitalization. Lala goes on to assess France's willingness and capability to embrace this technology, GE Healthcare's own digital and AI competencies and the role it can play in facilitating France's eHealth transformation.

What are the main challenges and opportunities being faced by the French healthcare system today?

In the last three years, the reforms of the healthcare system have been put into place and the new administration is open to discussions with the industry. This is, of course, a continuation of the French ambition to deliver good care to the entire population across the country. The major development in this context was the establishment of regional hospital groups (*Groupements hospitaliers de territoires (GHT*)) in 2016. Clear objectives have been identified to define care pathways on a regional level. This initiative first started in the public sector and will be most likely expanded to the private sector to ensure that all patients have access to an equal level of care.

The main challenges are a shortage of doctors and difficulties in sharing data. There is a huge initiative to connect information archives to ensure that a medical image created during the day

can be shared beyond the hospital's borders.

The French health system is well designed and has the infrastructure to support such a program, but one question remains: how to implement such organizational changes? This will require hospitals to find ways to work together even more closely and be well coordinated.

Digital transformation is not about the devices, but it starts with – and all comes down to – the people. Three years ago, digitalization was a discussion. We are now seeing an alignment of stakeholders to identify care pathways. Afterwards, we can expect the focus to be on reimbursement with a shift from procedure payments to bundled payments. This will be the biggest transformation in the system.

What can be GE Healthcare's role in France's digital transformation and how is the affiliate prepared for this shift?

Compared to other industries, healthcare is much further behind in embracing digitalization. As a leader in medical imaging and diagnostics, data processing is in GE Healthcare's DNA. We are increasingly integrating deep learning in our solutions to help doctors diagnose more rapidly, confidently and precisely.

Our biggest priority is to make sure we can connect the dots and build a network of data. We have a vast digital department focused on archiving and sharing data, building IT dashboards, as well on the three core competencies of artificial intelligence (AI): – data gathering, data analytics, and machine learning. GE Healthcare is supporting the digital transformation of healthcare, and the GHT in particular, leveraging AI within its own products and services to create efficiencies and to predict care needs.

France uses specific reimbursement schemes for each type of procedures. It is hard to know what this model will look like for the more holistic concept of "diagnostics". However, more than just cost-effectiveness, we want to act as a partner in freeing up time for the doctors to spend more time with their patients. GE Healthcare's goal is to create sustainability while preserving the quality of care – enabling doctors to engage patients in their recovery.

What is the importance of forging partnerships within the ecosystem for the development of GE Healthcare's digital capacity?

Creating partnerships is absolutely critical for us. Not only are we aiming to provide better products, but also making sure these products are efficient. To do so, we need health professionals to assess how our solutions are performing against their expectations. Therefore, GE Healthcare develops its products in collaboration with medical teams, fueled by our top tier R&D and manufacturing capabilities.

There are many French start-ups working on eHealth, digitalization, and AI. Successful collaboration can benefit GE Healthcare through access to innovative ideas and new technologies, while startups benefit from access to greater resources, market insight, and customer validation.

Our knowledge and integration within the French healthcare ecosystem are invaluable to the role we play to the digitalization of the country.

Do you believe that France can take the lead in Europe as a pioneer in the healthcare digitalization space?

Absolutely. First, France has the scale and the competencies to be a frontrunner of digitalization. Second, France benefits from a large pool of talented scientists, a strong educational system and a patient-centric approach to healthcare. And third, AI has been identified as a key priority by the Macron administration, especially in the healthcare business – which shows the French commitment to pioneer innovation. With 600 researchers in France, including 200 software engineers, and strong connections with clinicians across the board GE Healthcare is well positioned to support France’s ambitions of modernization and digitization of its healthcare system.

After the announcement of GE’s separation for its healthcare branch last June, the planned IPO has been put on hold and the group’s made a decision to sell the GE Biopharma unit to Danaher last month. How has this impacted GE Healthcare’s operations in France?

This was a unique opportunity for GE to strengthen its balance sheet. Speaking truthfully, the sale of Biopharma will not change GE Healthcare’s strategy. GE Healthcare business. GE Healthcare has a strong presence in France with 2,800 employees including research, development and manufacturing, and we are currently exploring new avenues to invest in our capabilities. With our broad portfolio of diagnostics, monitoring, and digital solutions, we remain at the center of a global healthcare system striving for precision health. GE remains committed to exploring the right

options to build a stronger, more independent

To what extent is it an advantage to have the GE corporation's European headquarters next to GE Healthcare in France?

Having the European headquarters of GE just next to us is indeed an advantage. Having the group's R&D teams close by to us is a huge asset when it comes to building intimacy and collaborations, especially in the digital space. GE Healthcare has the biggest imaging footprint in the market. The presence of GE's European head office in France backs us and positions us as an important industry stakeholder. It also helps us enter discussions with the government about the future of healthcare in France, namely AI, and what role GE Healthcare could play.

Looking forward, what objectives do you hope to achieve within the upcoming five years?

Our first priority is to continue having a significant impact on the healthcare system with our products. We will continue to partner with different research sites for GE Healthcare devices while continuing to expand our service capabilities. This is a goal beyond just products – addressing data analytics, AI applications, and change management for the digital shift. In collaboration with GE Healthcare Partners, we have the consulting skills along with the products and services to make these healthcare changes happen. In five years, I want GE Healthcare to not only be perceived as a great product provider but as a premier solutions provider.

What final message would you like to deliver on behalf of GE Healthcare and France?

This is an exciting time for the healthcare industry. I am optimistic about what the future holds. Whenever there are big changes and challenges, there are opportunities to make valuable contributions. GE Healthcare is eager to be a part of this journey, and our focus is on having a positive impact on healthcare delivery in France.

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