Joyce Lee – General Manager, Amgen Taiwan

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Joyce Lee, general manager of Amgen Taiwan, shares her journey of building up the affiliate after only having entered the market three years ago and goes on to offer insights on the island's unique assets to the company's operations. Ms. Lee also highlights Amgen's dedication to Taiwan's healthcare system by introducing innovative biologics and emerging biosimilar products while encouraging "predict & prevent" as a means to support sustainability in the face of an aging population.

Ms Lee, as you near the completion of your first full year with Amgen, what priorities did you identify when you took on the role and how have you progressed in realizing them so far?

My objectives when joining Amgen were quite straightforward and aligned with the regional vision of the group. Amgen is very new to Taiwan, so our initial priority has been to enhance our company branding and build our presence in the market. Although Amgen is a leading biotechnology company worldwide, we were a new name to many of the industry and healthcare stakeholders in the country.

Secondly, we have been focused on building our portfolio here in Taiwan by continuously commercializing Amgen's products. We have done rather well so far, in fact, some of our products have already become market leaders within the last three years. For example, the osteoporosis

and bone metastasis product. By the end of this year, we will have our first biosimilar launched in Taiwan.

Finally, having a team-centred approach is very important to my strategy. Leading a company which had only three years in the market by the time I came on board has been a very meaningful experience. The affiliate's team have been well trained within other pharma organizations, but the longest standing employee tenure in Amgen Taiwan has been three years – which creates a very interesting yet fresh dynamic. Therefore, we are working to create an open and engaging work culture for the team while building a robust talent development roadmap.

Nearly four years after entering into Taiwan, how would you describe Amgen's position in the market today?

Amgen is a company specialized in biotechnology. We were very glad to establish our affiliate in Taiwan in 2015. Taiwan is a great place for us to interchange with many professional healthcare providers. Well established healthcare infrastructure also helped Amgen to know the market dynamics as well as to learn about the opportunities to work with different stakeholders to support patients and enhance access.

As a group, Amgen achieved total sales of USD 22.5 billion in 2018, what is the strategic significance of Taiwan for Amgen?

Speaking about Taiwan specifically, there are several areas where we can contribute to Amgen globally, the first being our healthcare expertise. Although Taiwan is only 0.3 percent of the world's global pharma market, our National Health Insurance system is renowned worldwide. There are more and more requests coming from global headquarters to access Taiwan's health data to better understand disease trends.

Secondly, Taiwan is one of the few countries in APAC that has the capabilities to run first-in-human clinical trials. Thanks to our clinical infrastructure and expertise, we are well-positioned to run trials for when Amgen is looking to expand trials outside the US or for diseases which have a high prevalence in the region.

Third, Taiwan is an ideal market to pilot Amgen's innovation programs. We are not too big and not too small. People are strong at innovation and execution. Technology and digital are well

accessible. These conditions support that Taiwan is a good place to run new ideas.

How has Amgen's portfolio offering been adapted to meet the market needs of Taiwan?

Our portfolio is quite diverse, yet they all have the commonality of being biologic products. Amgen covers a wide range of therapeutic areas including osteoporosis, cardiovascular, oncology– which although we have not been traditionally positioned in the space, we have a very exciting pipeline in development – haematology, and nephrology. Lastly, Amgen has identified a new commitment to biosimilar products.

Biosimilars is a new solution for which we want to partner with the government, payers, and healthcare providers to serve patients. Our mission is to explore how we can broaden the use and access of biologics for suitable patients in Taiwan.

How attractive is the Taiwanese biosimilars space? Just how ready and prepared is the country to receive these types of therapies?

Biosimilars are totally new for everyone, and this is very exciting. Amgen can be a pioneer in defining the model for these products in Taiwan. So far, we have received positive feedback from stakeholders able to learn more about the products. Right now, we are focusing to work with the government, physicians, and patients to help them to understand the value biosimilars.

In Taiwan, physicians tend to prefer branded products so even chemical generics have had to work hard in marketing their products. However, biologics are a different story which requires a much higher level of manufacturing know-how and capability. Therefore, we are working to share the knowledge with stakeholders on what a biosimilar really is. Additionally, because biosimilars are high value-added products, we are hoping to work with the government to ensure that the needed patients can have access to these treatments. In the end, Amgen's key priority is to broaden the access of our products for the benefit of patients.

Taiwan's healthcare system is facing increasing pressures coming from budget cuts caused by sustainability and efficiency concerns. How is Amgen cooperating with the Taiwanese government to face these challenges?

The current healthcare concept not only in Taiwan but most countries is a “Break and Fix” methodology – healthcare providers treat patients reactively when they are sick, and the system then pays afterwards. However, the ageing rate around the world is beginning to pick up speed. In Taiwan specifically, our aged – soon to be super-aged – population coupled with the lowest birthrate in the world, the burden of sustainability will be very heavy in the near future. Therefore, if we do not move away from the “Break and Fix” approach, no healthcare system will be sustainable.

Amgen’s response to this challenge is to promote a “Predict and Prevent” concept – meaning to leverage available data to enhance the use of preventative medicine. By determining high-risk patient populations, we can create better prevention programs as we see with breast cancer and hypertension. With the increasingly modern capacities we have in big data and analytic technologies, we can work to avoid more serious and costly health issues in the future. Amgen alone cannot achieve this ideal structure, so we will continue to work with our business partners and extend collaborations to even new industries as we all work toward a common goal.

What is Amgen’s contribution in helping to advance the growth of the biotech industry in Taiwan?

Within three years, Amgen has grown its direct presence in Taiwan from just one employee to over 120 staff, providing job opportunities to the biomedical industry. We are also investing in Taiwan by bringing clinical trials here to the island. Taiwan has a strong capacity to contribute to clinical research and we have more than ten ongoing clinical trials. Additionally, Amgen provides learning opportunities to Taiwan’s scientists to work in our global headquarters in the US through the Ministry of Science and Technology’s “LEAP Program”. Finally, we are acting to have more concrete collaborations with the National Biotechnology Research Park (BioHub). The park is a very promising initiative to establish Taiwan as a biotech R&D hub within the region. We are aiming to sign the Letter of Intent with the BioHub to show our commitment to working with Taiwan’s biotech industry and academic institutions and provide opportunities to further develop the local biotech space.

What strategic objectives are you aiming to accomplish within the upcoming five years as general manager of Amgen Taiwan?

By the end of 2020, we have two goals – position Amgen to be the best company to work for in Taiwan and be the pioneer of the biotech landscape.

Looking forward to 2025, we should have a more diverse portfolio – launching an even stronger oncology offering. As Taiwan is facing an ageing population, I hope to position Amgen as a partner of the government and healthcare system in the management of patient longevity through our osteoporosis and cardiovascular products. A picture in my mind: in 2025, I want to see Amgen play a stronger role with different stakeholders to enhance the quality of healthcare and science in Taiwan. Meanwhile, the passion of my heart is to develop people. I hope more prominent talents will be developed, enhancing their influence to contribute back to society, and to shape a better world.

What career advice can you offer to young professionals in Taiwan looking to advance their own careers?

Speaking to domestic Taiwanese, my biggest recommendation is to equip themselves with language skills, excel in the quality of their work or study, and most importantly to internationalize themselves. Taiwan is a very comfortable place to work and live. Domestic young professionals should keep themselves well connected to what's happening globally. Gaining life experience in different countries and regions is really an invaluable experience both professionally and personally.

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