

Shining A New, Brighter Light: Three Medication Industry Insights

DRUGS



BY: Denis Hello

If I were to pick three trends in the biopharmaceutical industry that are top of mind as we head into the end of this very unprecedented year, it would be purposefully navigating COVID-19, the importance of timely patient access to medications, and an increased focus on innovation. One is universal, the second is increasingly important, and the third is the story of the biopharmaceutical industry.

Purposely Navigating COVID-19

Everyone is touched by COVID-19 and it continues to turn our world upside down. As a manufacturer of innovative medications, our priority is to ensure patients have continuous access to treatment. This includes manufacturing, distribution, and ensuring healthcare professionals and patients have consistent access to life-saving and life-changing therapies. Our efforts involve proactive communication to healthcare professionals, patients, caregivers, advocates, and health authorities. Our outreach – and active listening – provides a unique window into real needs that impact patient access.

One example is the challenges oncology patients face in getting to the hospital for their medical appointments. This insight gave us the opportunity to find a simple and meaningful solution by partnering with a car service in order to get patients safely to their appointments. If patients are facing barriers getting to their hospital and clinic appointments, let's remove the barrier.

Like all employers, we needed to rapidly change our ways of working and adapt to being remote. We needed to become more

digital. This involved training, creating new tools, and discovering new ways of communicating. But, to support real change, we can't just focus on internal eTransformations. We need to support our stakeholders – healthcare professionals and patient groups – by helping them enhance their digital practices and modifying our delivery models and the way we traditionally conduct business.

I'm very proud of our team's innovative adaptability. We seem to have made a positive impact as supported by third-party data from ZS Canada where AbbVie is highlighted as having one of the best pandemic responses.

Timely Access To Medications

Our mission is to discover and deliver innovative medicines and technologies to raise the standard of care. We are unwavering in our commitment to bring the best science to patients by focusing on groundbreaking medicines to address chronic progressive diseases, investing in new pathways, technologies and approaches, and seeking solutions for diseases that currently have few or no treatments. We take on the toughest health challenges. But we do more than treat diseases, we aim to make a remarkable impact on people's lives.

When we look at Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries, Canada ranks third from last, after New Zealand and Portugal, in terms of amount of time it takes for medications to be listed on public formulary. When we look at Canadian healthcare budgets, we see prescription medications account for 13 per cent of the overall health spend. Despite many innovative drugs addressing unmet medical needs in complex diseases areas such as oncology and immunology, this percentage has been decreasing for years. It is also consistent with countries having comparable healthcare systems (Source:

Prescription Drugs Pharma Focus 2024).

I truly believe in the power of partner-

ships to advance standards of care and build a better, more sustainable healthcare system. Every Canadian should have timely access to the medicines they need.

Focus On Innovation

I see first-hand the incredible progress innovative therapies have made on people lives, on their ability to work and function. In some disease areas, if treated early enough, we have seen patients enter remission. I think about brave Canadians like Mark Silverstein, a chronic lymphocytic leukemia (CLL) survivor.

Through his journey with cancer, he found a new purpose in life. He changed careers and returned to school to become a psychotherapist. He helps clients in his private practice and shares his experience with cancer openly through writing articles, speaking at leukemia/lymphoma conferences, co-facilitating patient survivor groups, and advocating (at Queen's Park) for better access to the same kind of treatments that have allowed him to keep doing the things he loves. Like so many, he inspires and leads by example.

That is why we are committed to research and development with 21 new products or new indications we hope to deliver by 2023 in Canada. In 2019, we invested over US\$5 billion in research and development globally and we are running close to 100 clinical trials in Canada.

Next December, when we reflect on the year, we will all be more focused on what matters and more balanced in our approach to many things in life. Our health and the health of our families and friends have never been more important than now.

This renewed focus has given us all an opportunity to shine a closer light on the vital topic of health.

BPM

Denis Hello

Vice-president & General Manager of AbbVie Canada