

“We have a message of taking India from diabetes capital to diabetes care capital”

28 February 2019 | Interviews | By Manbeena Chawla

Roche Diabetes Care India is a pioneer in the development of blood glucose monitoring systems, and a global leader for diabetes management systems and services.



Currently with a staff strength of 260, Roche Diabetes Care India holds a 48 per cent market share. The company has been encouraging the use of self-monitoring of blood glucose amongst people with diabetes. Especially with the threat of India becoming the world's diabetes capital looming large, patient awareness is a core focus for the organization. India is critical market for Roche Diabetes and ranks among top 15 in the world wide spread of the company. Asia Pacific region is the fastest growing region and India is one of the fastest growing market in Asia Pacific. It is growing in double digits.

The company announced the appointment of **Dr Gaurav Laroia** as General Manager for its India operations. Dr Gaurav assumed his new role with effect from January 1, 2019. He reports to Pedro Goncalves, Head of Roche Diabetes Care Asia Pacific and will be a member of the Roche Diabetes Care Asia Pacific Leadership Team. He relocated to Mumbai from his role as Head of Programme Management Office (PMO) APAC in Singapore. He has more than 18 years of experience in commercial operations, business development, and management consulting in healthcare-related multinational organisations in India, Singapore and the USA. He holds a Ph.D. in Molecular & Cellular Biology from New York University School of Medicine, USA and a Masters in Genetics from the University of Cambridge, UK. He shared his views on his new appointment and plans for the company in coming months.

Edited excerpts;

What is the role of the new leadership in the business?

I come from a philosophy where I think it is important to have a purpose behind the business, to know why we exist. Thus I would say, our role as a company is to collect, integrate and analyze relevant data to support treatment decisions and delay disease progression because in diabetes the biggest problems are cardiac and diabetic foot. So if we just sell strips meters it would be like opening a box of playing cards and dropping them on India. If the data is not connected back to the patient or to the healthcare provider you cannot analyze this to be able to manage the disease through integrated disease management. Thus, our role and our portfolio now include not only the traditional meters and strips but also meters and strips connected to digital devices both for the patient as well as for the healthcare professional.

Apart from doctors and patients, who are the other people, are you looking at to gather data?

Depending upon the segment that we target we need to meet the respective stakeholders such as the clinicians, the patients and as well as surrounding providers like the nurses or the dieticians and payers like insurance companies. Thus, because the task is so immense and multidisciplinary, we will definitely partner to achieve the job to be done. It could be a partnership to provide us broader access across India, it could be a partnership to help us reach the segment of people with diabetes whether it is Type 1 or the gestational diabetes population or the uncontrolled diabetic. We feel that data can help monitor the control that diabetics have achieved and prevent the downstream comorbidities because that is a big cost. So we need to have the capacity and the capability to be a good partner across the ecosystem as we think about integrated disease management.

Have you partnered with any insurance company?

No, we are currently not partnered with any company but we are actively seeking partnerships across the ecosystem to transform India into a diabetes care capital. I believe, there is a need to be able to provide data at a patient level such that they can facilitate adherence to treatment and therapy thus reducing or delaying the risk.

Which are the issues that need to be addressed in the coming period which needs great attention from your side?

The biggest issue is that there are 83 million people with diabetes in the country and only 32 million cases are diagnosed. Out of these only 25 million are treated. Thus by numbers, the number of cases treated is less than 10 per cent. Thus, the biggest challenge that we face is the need to really reframe the problem. Thus we will focus on our resourcing, the type of talent that we need in the organization and the partnerships needed to answer the question of how to solve the bigger problem which is at the patient level. I believe, if we solve the problem for the patient and the care giver, which is the healthcare professional, business will follow.

As part of the CSR activities, how you are actually addressing these issues?

We are very cautious that our Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) activities follow the right guidelines and do not intertwine with any business interest. The CSR activity today is focused but our attempt is to define our north star and our north star is our patient and their unmet need. So just from a company selling strips and meters, we are moving into a digital space. We have a portfolio with apps and everything else associated with it that allows us to get to the root cause of the problem. Our portfolio is designed to digitally address the needs of the patients and to help us get to integrated disease management, improving the lives of patients and at the same time serving our business interest.

What kind of growth you would be looking at for this coming year?

We have had double-digit growth for the last several years. Our attempt is to continue to outpace market growth in this category. We aim to grow continuously and rapidly in this sector and hopefully in the coming months, we can talk patient numbers and how many lives we have been able to impact and to translate that into growth. That is the story for our future.

Do you feel that in the next few years will it be possible for you to record the 50 per cent in market share considering the launching of new portfolios or digital technology?

Of course, we are putting in place a foundation that will allow us to expand our share of the market. By figures, only 25 million people are treated and only 10 per cent of those fall under the controlled diabetes category. Thus the potential is huge. It is difficult to answer whether we will grow and how much we will grow but our aim is always to keep the patient at the centre of the market opportunity and the opportunity to help patients with diabetes is huge. If we do that the potential to grow our business is immense.

Do you have any plans for expanding the business to reach out to positional patients? What role the government has to play?

Our philosophy revolves around the patient. The patient is at the centre of our strategy. We have a 1000 day ambition because it is 1000 days to 100 years of the discovery of insulin and the problem in India still remains big. Thus I believe, the government is a key stakeholder in all of this. The government has made Non Communicable Diseases (NCDs) a key area of emphasis. Within NCD they have made diabetes a key area of focus. So the government is working very closely as India being the diabetes capital. There are too many things to address around the patient today for any one company to do alone. I think the government plays a major role along with public-private partnerships and private partnerships.

Do you have any plans for public or private partnerships or enter private / private partnerships?

We are looking at all things public-private, private-private and we are participating in the international digital healthcare symposium because we feel that we have assets that can add value. It will take data to convince people and we are building that data. We have also established centres of excellence at certain diabetes institutes, including within government spaces, to be able to help with capability development.

Are you looking at startups to experience some of these issues?

Yes. We want to first know what is the job to be done and does the job to be done require a startup or does it require an incumbent. We want to partner for the sake of providing integrated disease management to patients in India and we view media as a key enabler for spreading our message. We have a message of taking India from the diabetes capital to the diabetes care capital and we need to partner for this both with the government as well as the private sector and we are open to any partnership because at the core of our strategy are the patient's needs.

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