

A Conversation with Ed Dybka, President of AstraZeneca Canada

What was your career path leading to your appointment as President of AstraZeneca Canada?

I've been part of the biopharmaceutical industry for almost 30 years. As a Canadian, one thing that has stayed constant is never losing sight of the important contributions we make as an industry to the health of Canadians and our healthcare system.

After graduating from the University of Toronto with a Bachelor of Science (B.Sc.) in Toxicology, I began my career as a sales representative with GlaxoSmithKline Canada and progressed my career in a variety of sales and marketing roles. I have had the opportunity to hold a number of senior leadership roles throughout my career, including Vice-President of Sales & Marketing, and Vice-President of Public Affairs & Reimbursement. In 2013, I led the establishment of Almirall in Canada, a biopharmaceutical company focused on the treatment of respiratory diseases and affiliated with Barcelona-based Almirall S.A.

These experiences helped prepare me for the role of President and CEO of AstraZeneca Canada Inc., which I took on in 2015. I am actively involved with Innovative Medicines Canada, as well as a Director on the Board of Life Sciences Ontario, an organization that represents and promotes Ontario's vibrant life sciences sector. Also, I am the Chair of the Acute Coronary Treatment (ACT) Foundation.



▲ Ed Dybka,
President of AstraZeneca Canada

How would you describe your leadership style?

I believe you can achieve incredible things when you create focus and empower people. When individuals and teams are given space and autonomy to do their jobs – and a strong sense of purpose behind their work – it generates great ideas and solutions. I also try to create a collaborative environment where we're able to engage in open, vibrant discussions and hear a variety of differing perspectives and ideas, regardless of titles or hierarchy.

Finally, to help individuals deliver their best, I believe it's important to help create a highly engaging environment where people enjoy their work, can make a meaningful contribution and have fun.

You recently launched new products; can you tell us more about them?

We recently received regulatory approval from Health Canada for two important oncology treatments in lung and ovarian cancer. Tagrisso® represents a significant milestone as the first and only targeted treatment for patients with locally advanced or metastatic epidermal growth factor receptor (EGFR) T790M mutation-positive non-small cell lung cancer (NSCLC). Approved following one of the fastest development programs from start of clinical trials to regulatory approval, Tagrisso® is part of a new era of medical advances that demonstrate the promise of 'personalized' or 'targeted' therapy.

We also received approval for Lynparza® as a maintenance treatment for patients with platinum-sensitive relapsed BRCA-mutated ovarian cancer, making it the first Poly ADP-Ribose Polymerase (PARP) inhibitor available in Canada. This is a significant milestone for patients with advanced BRCA-mutated ovarian cancer as there have been very limited options available to women living with this disease.

Both NSCLC and ovarian cancer are fatal diseases. Their impact is significant: in the case of ovarian cancer specifically, every three hours a Canadian woman is newly diagnosed with the disease. These new medicines represent important advances in oncology and a tremendous opportunity for As-



▲ The AstraZeneca Canada staff participated in World Diabetes Day.

traZeneca, Canadian medical practitioners and, most importantly, patients.

What are some of AstraZeneca’s key business objectives and priorities?

We have made substantial progress in reshaping our research and early development efforts to help us to produce a steady stream of new medicines that will support our long-term growth. Looking ahead, a central focus for us is to ensure the successful launch of new medicines across our core therapy areas of cardiovascular & metabolic diseases, oncology, and respiratory. We have one of the most ambitious launch agenda’s within our industry – having launched five new products/indications in 2016 and planning for the launch of 15 new products/indications by 2020.

Equally important, is a focus on ensuring that Canadian patients in need have access to these medical advances. Funding systems for health care are under stress and there is growing pressure from payers to see drugs that are not only efficacious and innovative, but also affordable. We need to find a way to better partner with payers and

patients to ensure availability to the best medicines and an improved understanding of the great value that innovative medicines bring.

What does AstraZeneca’s pipeline look like? What does this mean for the company’s future direction?

It’s an exciting time to be at AstraZeneca – where we are really pushing the boundaries of science to improve our understanding of the biology of many disease areas. Looking ahead, AstraZeneca has the potential to launch more than 15 new medicines and indications in the next two years, with around half in our oncology therapy area. Our broad pipeline of next-generation medicines is focused on such disease areas as: severe asthma, chronic kidney and heart disease, as well as breast, ovarian, lung and hematological cancers.

Personalized or targeted medicine is at the centre of our entire research and development strategy, with roughly 80 percent of our pipeline now linked to an individual’s genetic biomarker profile. Our ambition is to shift the

treatment paradigm and transform patients’ lives by ensuring that innovative, targeted treatments are matched to those patients who will benefit most.

Has the company announced any new research initiatives in Canada you would like to share with us?

We’re involved in many exciting Canadian research partnerships and have notably expanded our research footprint in Canada the past few years. AstraZeneca Canada was recently selected as a key Global Clinical Trial Delivery site and is playing a pivotal role accelerating the development of many of our priority pipeline compounds in the areas of oncology, immuno-oncology and respiratory. The Mississauga team is leading roughly 30 global clinical trials, some involving more than 40 countries around the world. This is a great accomplishment that really reflects the Canadian team’s expertise and great track record in clinical study management and delivery.

AstraZeneca has also entered into a number of novel research partnerships across the country, tapping into the

world-class scientific capabilities and infrastructure in health sciences right here in Canada. As part of a landmark clinical development partnership with the Canadian Cancer Trials Group (CCTG) at Queen's University, the CCTG is leading a number of key Canadian and global clinical studies in such areas as lung, breast and pancreatic cancer.

Increasing our knowledge of the biologic mechanisms of disease is critical to developing innovative new medicines targeted at those patients likely to benefit most. As part of this scientific effort, we recently entered into a milestone genomics research partnership with the world-renowned Montreal Heart Institute, which aims to advance personalized health care in cardiovascular disease and diabetes. I'm also personally very proud of our support of FORGE AHEAD (TransFORMation of IndiGENous PrimAry HEAlthcare), a novel research program that is supporting improvements in diabetes care for Canada's First Nations communities, where diabetes prevalence is much higher than the national average.

What are some of the major issues you see facing the biopharmaceutical industry?

I believe this is an incredibly exciting and pivotal time for the biopharmaceutical industry in medical discovery. Globally, it's now estimated there are roughly 7,000 new medicines in development – more than ever before, and a majority of these with the potential to be first-in-class. New innovative medicines are transforming the treatment of diseases – helping people live longer lives, curing some diseases and even turning fatal diseases into chronic conditions.

Despite great medical advances,

Two Minutes With Ed Dybka

? What's the best piece of advice you've ever received?

I have been very fortunate to have worked with some outstanding professionals during my career who took the time to teach and mentor me while giving me great advice. I was once told that I "should not worry about things that I can't control." The biopharmaceutical business and industry is incredibly dynamic and complex; focusing on what you can control is important to being successful. It's also a great coping mechanism!

? What gives you the greatest satisfaction in your work?

I take great pride in knowing that each day the work we do directly improves the lives of millions of patients across Canada. What's more, we are seeing incredible advances in treatment across so many disease areas – from type 2 diabetes and Hepatitis B, to lung cancer and much more.

? What is your favourite movie?

Pulp Fiction. It was revolutionary at the time it was released and remains a modern-day masterpiece.

? How did you get into the pharmaceutical industry?

During my senior years of university I worked for GlaxoSmithKline Canada in their warehouse packing boxes, including samples for sales representatives. I was very fortunate to secure a commitment for an interview for a sales representative role, and subsequently landed the job before I graduated. The rest is history; I've remained passionate about this industry and the important contributions we make to the health of Canadians and our healthcare system ever since.



▲ A view of the atrium at AstraZeneca's Canadian headquarters, located in Mississauga, Ontario.

we're seeing weakened patient access to innovative medicines in Canada. On average, less than half of all new medicines are publicly reimbursed. And for those that are reimbursed, it typically takes more than one year following regulatory approval by Health Canada before any public listing occurs. This is simply not acceptable in a leading country like Canada with a first class healthcare system.

An aging population, the growing prevalence of chronic disease and weak economic growth are putting

pressures on healthcare budgets. There's a real opportunity for industry and government to partner to solve this issue of healthcare system sustainability. As healthcare services become strained, access to innovative medicines can play an integral role in meeting those demands and delivering great value and quality health care for Canadian patients. Despite the challenges, I'm optimistic that our industry will be able to collaborate with the federal and provincial governments to ensure a predictable and sustainable pharma-

ceutical operating environment in Canada.

Can you please speak to the importance of employee engagement at AstraZeneca Canada?

Although it sounds a little cliché, it's true that our people are the foundation of our business. Indeed, our ongoing success is based on great people with a deep connection to our purpose and passion for science – two of AstraZeneca's core values are "we put patients first" and "we follow the science."

The company places great emphasis on creating a great place to work – a dynamic, engaging environment, where every employee can thrive and reach their full potential. This means nurturing growth, development, health and wellness and more. Fundamentally, we believe we're at our best when our employees are at theirs.

We take pride in having been selected as one of *Greater Toronto's Top Employers 2017* – a recognition of our collective efforts to create an engaging work environment – where we actively bring to life our values, connect to our sense of purpose, and have the opportunity to grow, develop and have fun. **CPM**