

BMS builds team to prepare for exceptional growth in 2020 and beyond

A profile featuring Al Reba, General Manager, Bristol Myers Squibb Canada



2019 Cycle for Melanoma: BMS employees are passionate about giving back to patient communities.

The onset of COVID-19 in Canada has certainly made this a challenging year for businesses. How is BMS managing in the current environment?

Our first priority was the health and safety of our employees, patients and healthcare professionals as we immediately executed public health distancing and isolation measures across the country. Our dedicated team has been working to ensure business continuity, including the ability to deliver our medicines to those who need them, which means mitigating disruption in our clinical or commercial supply chain due to the pandemic. In terms of employee support, we increased our internal communications frequency and introduced new platforms, including virtual town halls and employee forums, videos, an intranet site, employee podcasts and a dedicated Yammer channel. Externally, BMS donated N95 masks for front-line healthcare workers through Innovative Medicines Canada (IMC), as well as funds and expertise to help communities here in Canada, allocating special funding to address the increase in requests from patient organizations. On a global level, the Bristol Myers Squibb Foundation has also provided more than \$6 million in financial support to date. I am proud that we are able to react locally to needs in our community, and I applaud our local team members who are highlighting these needs and shepherding them forward.

Two Minutes with Al Reba



Al Reba

General Manager,
Bristol Myers Squibb Canada

? **What was your first job and what did you learn from it?**

I worked on the production line at a small, local ice cream factory in the suburbs of New York City. The job was a swift and humbling introduction to the merits of physical labor and hard work. My job on the team of four was to package the ice cream and load it into the freezer – and then of course we had to spend time taking the machinery apart and cleaning it. On my first day, I accidentally dropped a metal bucket into the churning vat of ice cream – we had to shut down the entire line. I thought I would be fired on the spot, but the owner stuck with me – and at the end of the summer he told me I was the best employee he had ever had. I learned an important management lesson from him – the virtues of patience and second chances.

? **What has been the biggest transition moving to Canada?**

I always joke that I finally found a city where everyone wants to talk about my favourite sport. But, as a native New Yorker, I will still only be cheering for my favourite NHL team, the New York Islanders. In terms of my family's transition, it has been remarkable to see my wife and children learn French so quickly. I'm also taking French lessons and appreciate everyone's friendly responses as I use my few go-to phrases during meetings – starting with "êtes-vous prêts?" and finishing with "allons-y!"

? **If you were a popular social media platform, which would you be?**

No doubt it would be Twitter. I feel confident that if you ask my team, they would absolutely agree. I am dedicated to getting things done with as few words as possible and a minimum of unnecessary conversation, which minimizes confusion and information overload. This is my philosophy on how to give and receive communication, and I think it is helpful in this industry.

? **If you could have one additional talent, what would it be?**

I'd love to be able to sing. I am quite skilled at carpool karaoke during my solo car rides, but I'm not what you would call a "crooner." In grad school, I played the bass guitar in a seven-person band covering everything from the Rolling Stones to The Cure, but we only had six microphones – guess who didn't get a mic!

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2019 Cycle for Melanoma Town Hall led by Al Reba.

The acquisition of Celgene closed at the end of 2019. Can you tell us what is exciting about the integration of these two companies?

Our goal is to achieve revolution, not evolution, in healthcare and – by combining with Celgene – we have made significant strides in creating a leading biopharma company in Canada. Together, we don't want to just make incremental improvements in disease states for patients, but instead find new ways to treat disease and significantly impact patient lives as quickly as possible. By joining forces, we can now leverage the speed and agility of Celgene, along with the experience, resources and know-how of BMS. This synergy of a hematology-oriented company and an organization specialized in oncology is a natural fit, making us a stronger and more experienced player in the oncology space.



2018 Family Day: BMS believes in supporting families and having fun together.

We want to establish an environment of authenticity and diversity of opinion – to support our shared goal of transforming patients’ lives through science.

What are the most important priorities facing your leadership team in the year ahead?

As leaders, we will need to push ourselves to respond quickly and to operate in an agile way. We also want to establish an environment of authenticity and diversity of opinion – to support our shared goal of transforming patients’ lives through science. Personally, as vice chair on the board of directors for Innovative Medicines Canada, I am also invested in the industry dialogue that surrounds the availability of life-saving medicines. It is crucial to continue to effectively manage the intricacies and complex issues that we all experience on the path to delivering innovative medicines to Canadians.

Tell us what is promising in the BMS pipeline.

BMS is genuinely committed to scientific excellence and a continued investment in R&D, which is slated to be close to \$9.4 billion in 2020. This commitment is evident when looking at our robust late-stage pipeline with an extraordinary seven global launches anticipated in the next 24 months. Our CAR T-cell therapy research is exciting and offers transformational potential in diseases such as cancer, hematology, heart failure, fibrosis, multiple sclerosis, psoriasis and neuroscience. These unprecedented scientific breakthroughs are advancing the treatment of disease as never before in human history. By unlocking the power of innovative science we have the opportunity to address some of the most challenging diseases of our time.

How is the promise of the new company captured in the branding unveiled earlier this year?

The new branding represents our future, and our focus on compassionate science in a modern world. Especially in these times, it is a representation of humanity, healing and giving, and of the personal touch we bring to our work, to each other, and to our community. The hand shows how we are always thinking about putting patients and people first, no matter what the situation, which is more important than ever today.

Describe how BMS Canada has been able to establish a leadership role in the Canadian biopharma space.

With 130 years of innovation behind us, we’re proud of our track record. With our leadership position in immunotherapy, we have two products that are now considered the standard of care for metastatic melanoma



Harshila Patel and Aristea Danopoulos celebrating Canadian launch of new corporate brand.

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Les Rossignols, BMS Canada's choir, serenades team and raises funds for community baskets provided to those in need in partnership with the West Island Assistance Fund.

and renal cancer, one of which is approved for 19 indications in 11 tumor types with two recent studies in first-line lung cancer. With the integration of Celgene, we will now lead the transformation of treatment in multiple myeloma and in the hematology space, as we're looking forward to four different launches of best-in-class, first-in-class medicines addressing areas of high unmet medical need. In the future, BMS will also be driving revolutions in immunology, and will continue to drive the momentum of our well-established anticoagulant.

What key components contribute to making BMS a great place to work? How does this translate into success?

Our employees across Canada were asked this exact question. What they told us is that BMS is actually more than just a great place to work, it is also a great place to grow and feel part of a team. We believe we have the best and the brightest people in the industry. My personal leadership strategy is based on five key pillars. To start, I am focused on establishing teams that value diverse thinking. Second, I believe it's important to create an environment of trust and transparency and a climate of authenticity; the result being open dialogue with leadership, which I think sets BMS apart. Third, I want to empower people so that decisions aren't made behind closed doors, and so patients benefit from everyone's expertise. Fourth, I value a competitive intensity, with employees working hard for the patients who depend on our new medicines. Lastly, work should be fun and a place where we are able to be our best selves.

Growing and developing our team can only happen if we lead with a growth mindset that encourages individuals to push themselves out of their comfort zone.



BMS employees join a pick-up game in the Montreal head office parking lot.



BMS team working hard at Community Outreach Day 2019.

fresh ideas and diverse opinions will continue to enable innovation, bringing hope to patients who need new treatment options. And, with all these new people joining our team, we will have a new culture to build that reflects aspects of our legacy businesses and the diverse perspectives that this new talent pool will bring with them. **CPM**

How does the organization support professional development and career growth for its employees?

Growing and developing our team can only happen if we lead with a growth mindset that encourages individuals to push themselves out of their comfort zone. This is a key focus for our teams – to ensure robust development plans for every employee, as well as opportunities for stretch assignments and tours of duty across the organization. With the new Canadian structure, we see great opportunity for professional development and this will continue to be a priority going forward.

Describe some of the new opportunities on the horizon at BMS Canada. With tremendous growth expected, what does this mean for talent acquisition in the future?

BMS is in a period of significant growth. With the integration of Celgene and the decision to maintain our headquarters in Montreal, we have an unprecedented number of positions to fill in the short term. Right now, we're hiring in all fields including all types of commercial roles from market access, marketing, sales, medical affairs to commercial operations and corporate affairs. We're looking for people who enjoy problem solving and are driven to work in a breadth of therapeutic areas that are rich and full of promise. The infusion of