

Special

HEALTH

Patient-focused service key to a better health system

Q&A with Hugh O'Neill, President and CEO, Sanofi-Aventis Canada

**Where do you see the key issues in Canada's health system and the pharma sector's role in it?**

Canada's population is aging, and the incidence of chronic disease is rising. As a result, the system will require more services, not fewer. This will mean more innovation, not health care cost cutting. Part of the challenge is the system is set up to treat sickness. The question is how could it be managed differently; how can we build disease prevention and more comprehensive treatment into the system, now and for the future? We have to think about total solutions: education, changes in lifestyle, nutrition and other ways to help prevent chronic disease.

How is Sanofi evolving to help address these issues?

We are no longer just thinking about how to develop and launch a new product and make the product as successful as possible. The bigger concern is how to best put solutions in front of physicians and patients that allow them to manage

disease better. What we're doing now is trying to understand the journey that the patient and his or her family go through; the impact that has on resources, and how we can provide solutions. Some of those solutions might be services, like education, devices or diagnostics – the systems that treat the entire patient. When you understand that and think about how to best position the treatment of the patient, it opens a lot of doors.

So, Sanofi is expanding into other markets and services?

Yes. If you look at the traditional pharma model, most of us have really made our success based on the next big breakthrough and discovery. What Sanofi is doing, to be truly sustainable, is building partnerships as they relate to discovery. We develop products and services very well, but we are not the only engine for innovations. We need to build greater partnerships with universities, research centres, biotech companies and other

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Under the leadership of Sanofi-Aventis Canada president and CEO Hugh O'Neill, the company is expanding beyond its primary focus on therapeutics for diabetes, oncology and cardiovascular disease into other areas of health care including consumer products and patient education. Ranked among Canada's top spenders in biopharmaceutical research and development, Sanofi also seeks to increase its investments in collaborative R&D projects with academia and other agencies.

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entities to help create the next generation of innovation. Over the last two-plus years, we've formed more than 75 partnerships globally, some of those in Canada, like our partnership with Sunnybrook Health Sciences Centre on care for diabetic foot ulcers, and with the Institute for OneWorld Health, Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and the University of Saskatchewan for a synthetic drug to fight malaria. By building partnerships and networks, you have a much bigger chance of building sustainability and providing better solutions to the health care system.

Any examples of results from these partnerships?

Yes. If you think about the promise of where health care is going, one of the things we hear a lot about is the idea of personalized medicine. We're working closely with GPEC – a Vancouver-based research partnership – to help identify biomarkers for specific tumour types. As we develop treatments and regimens

going forward, we can use those biomarkers to determine which patients are more likely to have a positive outcome. This is really ground breaking. Jump from research to patient service collaboration. Working with a First Nations health access centre in Ontario, we built a greenhouse where people will learn about diabetes management and healthier lifestyle choices. For us, this is the future of medicine – partnerships, research and services. It's better for the system, better for the patient, and quite honestly it's better for us, because providing real solutions helps improve our sustainability.

How would you like people to think of Sanofi?

We represent a message of hope. We are helping people affected by disease. It's about providing solutions for a more sustainable health care system. Those solutions can be therapeutics, they can be education, they can be consumer products – a wide array of solutions that can help patients and providers in the health care system and give patients reason to hope; there is a potential outcome of this journey that is positive for them and their families.

Anything else to add?

It's an interesting time; it's a challenging time, especially in Canada. I think it's also a time of great opportunity for collaboration among all parts in the health care system, between government, patients, their caregivers, pharmaceutical manufacturers and health care providers – they all need to look at and answer the hard questions. We are very fortunate to have what we have; the question we should be asking is how to make it better – not just for this generation, but for future generations.

This interview was edited and condensed.

ONLINE?Visit www.sanofi.ca for more information.This report was produced by RandallAnthony Communications Inc. (www.randallanthony.com) in conjunction with the advertising department of The Globe and Mail. Richard Deacon, National Business Development Manager, rdeacon@globeandmail.com.

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