

Brendan O'Brien

Country Manager of Pfizer Slovakia



Working for a healthier world™



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Connection spoke with Brendan O'Brien, new Country Manager of Pfizer Slovakia, about the invention and development of new medication and the protection of intellectual property.

You have been working with Pfizer for 8 years, in offices in Great Britain, Germany, Brussels... Was there any special reason for coming to Slovakia?

My first business trip to Slovakia was in January 2005, and since that time I have had a great admiration for the work of Pfizer employees here. I have been very impressed with the extent to which Pfizer in Slovakia understands and addresses the particular needs of our customers through innovative medicines and programs. From my previous experience in the US, the UK, Germany and Belgium, I found that this type of close familiarity with customer needs is more challenging to obtain due to the large populations of such countries. For all of these reasons, when the opportunity arose to lead this organization, I did not hesitate. I am at my happiest when I feel that I can create a positive impact on the lives of the community in which I live, and in this position I have a strong conviction that I can do that.

How do you and your family like the life in Slovakia?

We are still exploring, however we have had a great time so far. My wife, son Lewis (5 years old) and daughter Lucy (8 months old) are all getting to

know the area and community where we live. The Slovaks we have been met have been very warm and hospitable. As a family, on weekends we enjoy traveling to many attractive parts of Slovakia close to Bratislava.

Can you already feel any differences between working in Slovakia and the rest of the countries you worked in?

It is still fairly early for me to notice major differences; however one difference I see is in the importance of working directly with customers. Although Slovakia is a large country, in many ways there are features of a close community. It is clear to me that integrity is very important to be a respected business leader, as is acting in a consistent and responsive way.

Pfizer is the world's largest research-based biomedical and pharmaceutical company and is dedicated to developing new, safe medicines to prevent and treat serious diseases. Each year, we make significant investments into research and development. For example, in the previous year, Pfizer invested 7.6 billion USD, which was the largest R&D investment worldwide.

I have found that the best way to understand the needs of the customer is not by relying simply on detailed market needs analyses, but rather to get on the phone or get in the car, and have a meeting and talk directly with these customers.

Pfizer is an international company offering top medications in several fields of medicine. Is it difficult to protect your inventions today? Is it easier than in the past? Do you feel that there is a lack of intellectual property protection in Slovakia?

As a leader in innovation, it is always in the interests of Pfizer and its shareholders to protect the investments which we place in developing that innovation.

It is this innovation that allows us to bring valuable medicines to the market in Slovakia, leading to healthier lives for the population. The degree to which our intellectual property is respected directly relates to the number of innovative products we can bring to market in the future. In the last four years I have been familiar with healthcare policy in Slovakia, I have observed an improvement in the treatment of intellectual property.

This can, in part be linked to Slovakia's accession to the European Union, and the full accountability required of an EU member state in the areas of data protection and intellectual property rights. The challenge in the future will be to ensure that government policy is consistent with these principles, and that the value offered through innovation is respected in actual implementation through strong intellectual property protection.

What inventions of Pfizer are you especially proud of?

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therapeutic areas. Of course, it is not possible to mention all of them.

But to come to the most recent innovations I would start with the critical disease area of cancer. Pfizer is fast becoming a global force in oncology. Our most recent and very significant contribution is sunitinib, launched this year in Slovakia.

Sunitinib is approved to treat rare forms of intestinal and kidney cancers. Its novel mechanism both cuts off the blood supply to the cancer and destroys cellular reproduction. Sunitinib is now also in trials for the treatment of breast, lung and colorectal cancer.

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Last year Pfizer brought pegabtanib - a new treatment for the age related macular degeneration leading in some patients into blindness. In these patients pegabtanib not only preserved, but also improved vision after a 2-year observation period according the outcome of clinical trials.

Then I have to mention the first single pill that treats both high blood pressure and high cholesterol levels – the combination of amlodipine and

atorvastatin (atorvastatin is still the world´s leading cholesterol-lowering medicine). Both active substances are very much recognized in Slovakia by both medical community and patients, and now this convenient treatment is available in Slovakia.

Just recently we launched varenicline in Slovakia, the first new smoking cessation prescription medicine in almost a decade and the most powerful drug in the treatment of nicotine. It has a unique dual mode of action, completely different from nicotine replacement therapy. Varenicline reduces the severity of smokers' cravings and alleviates many nicotine withdrawal symptoms.

The drug is accompanied by the rollout of a free behavioral support program, Life Rewards, which provides would-be quitters with encouragement, advice, activities and information throughout the quitting process.

Pain conditions are an area where physicians are currently frustrated with the lack of approved and proven pain therapies. Research has shown that eight out of ten patients with pain were not satisfied with their treatments.

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For these conditions, Pfizer has pregabalin which is already a highly appreciated medicine, addressing neuropathic pain conditions accompanying many serious diseases such as diabetes, low back pain, strokes, tumors and others.

Michaela Benedikovičová
Connection Editor

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After working as an Account Executive with PROVIDENCE HEALTH PLANS (a Non-Profit Health Maintenance Organization) in Oregon, USA, Mr.O´Brien finished the London Business School and joined SMITHKLINE BEECHAM PHARMACEUTICALS. He worked in the European Region Pharmaceuticals department in London, UK. In this company he directed the development of strategic plans for 14 European markets.

Mr. O´Brien has been working with Pfizer since 1999, joining the company as a Senior Manager in Strategic Support with Pfizer UK & Ireland in Kent, UK. Mr. O´Brien pioneered and led the internal strategic consultancy function for the department, creating and implementing a strategic pricing model for the UK, enabling senior management to monitor market uncertainties and direct a portfolio-based product pricing strategy. He managed the integration of distribution processes for UK Parke Davis and Pfizer products for the entire UK pharmaceutical portfolio and facilitated cross-departmental strategic working teams investigating strategic initiatives, training teams in the analytical tools and techniques needed to develop sound recommendations.

In 2001 Mr.O´Brien achieved the position of Senior Marketing manager with Pfizer UK & Ireland, Walton Oaks, UK. He managed a group of 50 employees providing cross-functional support for the in-line product marketing teams. He was a member of the UK Marketing Leadership Team; a team of four senior marketing managers reporting to the UK Marketing Director, responsible for overall departmental operations and strategy. Mr. O´Brien created and implemented strategies, and recruited a full team for Pfizer Europe's first Patient Relationship Marketing group. Mr. O´Brien also led the National Health Service (NHS) Marketing team, creating and driving strategies and programs to influence non-prescribing healthcare stakeholders in the UK.

Since 2004, Mr. O´Brien has been working as a Business Development Director for Pfizer Central & Eastern Europe Region (CEER) in Karlsruhe, Germany and Brussels, Belgium. He has been responsible for the overall Marketing, Business Development, Planning and Access performance in the 27 countries of CEER. He was appointed Acting Executive Director of CEER from March - October 2004, assuming the responsibilities of his direct supervisor.

Mr. O´Brien has been responsible for Strategic and Operating Planning development and the approval process in CEER.

In this role he managed and developed a team of 7 employees, providing Marketing, Business Development, Planning and Access direction and support to CEER country management and their teams, driving regional Corporate & Public Affairs strategy in CEER, in conjunction with market contacts and NY headquarters.

Mr. O´Brien is experienced in negotiating with governments in CEER countries for product reimbursement.

He has been the Country Manager of Pfizer Slovakia since first of June, 2007.