

Václav Novotný, MD, MBA

Country Manager of Merck Sharp & Dohme IDEA, Inc.
in Slovakia



Václav Novotný, MD, MBA
Country Manager
Merck Sharp & Dohme IDEA, Inc.
in Slovakia

First Victory over Infectious Causes of Cervical Cancer Thanks to Extensive MSD Research and Development Programs

Connection spoke with Václav Novotný, MD, MBA, Country Manager of Merck Sharp & Dohme IDEA, Inc. in Slovakia, a global research-driven pharmaceutical company. We asked Mr. Novotny about the motivation, research and development of new medicinal products and also about the breakthrough products that save millions of people's lives all over the world.

You stay at the head of the exceptionally successful pharmaceutical company MSD in Slovakia (Merck & Co., Inc. in U. S.), which delivered breakthrough therapeutic methods whilst also achieving important economic success at the same time. What are the strong points and mainstays of your company?

We try to accomplish the mission of our company: 'To develop unique medicinal products that improve the quality of life and satisfy customer needs, and provide employees with meaningful work and advancement opportunities, and investors with a superior rate of return at the same time. We are also successful thanks to more than 300 years of exceptional scientific tradition, innovative drugs and worldwide influence. Merck & Co., Inc. now has over 62,000 employees in 120 countries and 31 factories worldwide.

Our medicines are sold in more than 200 countries. For example, we gave streptomycin to the world – in the 1940s it was the first breakthrough treatment for tuberculosis, in the 1940s we also developed the means to mass produce penicillin, in the 1970s a vaccine against meningitis A, C and AC that saved millions of lives. Remember for example, antiretroviral drugs against HIV/ AIDS, or our latest two products – first a cervical cancer vaccine and now a new breakthrough diabetes therapy with sitagliptin that gives hope to patients with type II

diabetes. Both innovations were recently awarded significant international „pharmaceutical Oscars“.

The International 'Prix Galien' is a prestigious award, often considered the industry's equivalent of the Nobel Prize, and for almost 40 years recognizes the pharmaceutical industry's outstanding contribution to the quality of life. Your pharmaceutical company received the 'Prix GALIEN' USA Award for its vaccine Gardasil (in Slovakia Silgard) just few weeks ago. How do you see this award and what makes the vaccine so unique?

We are very proud that MSD received this prestigious award. From the very beginning of the research and development phase of this medicinal product we had the feeling that it would be a breakthrough event. Silgard is the first vaccine worldwide that is able to protect against oncological disease – cervical cancer. Silgard is indicated in 9- to 15-year old children & adolescents and in adult females from 16 to 26 years of age. Silgard was developed as a protection against two cancer-causing viruses and two viruses causing genital warts and lesions that inevitably damage the neck of the womb.

In fact, the vaccine gives almost 100 % protection against diseases causally related to Human Papillomavirus (HPV) types 6, 11, 16 and 18.

Silgard is unique because it represents the very first victory of man over an infectious cause of cancer.

MSD is known for its principle that success and victory should not be the only moving force in the pharmaceutical industry. What is your motivation?

It was our philanthropic initiatives that made us develop programs to help the ill, weak and

dependent. In 1980s our company began the free donation of MECTIZAN (ivermectin) for the treatment and prevention of river blindness (onchocerciasis), a disease endemic in Africa, Central and South America. In 1990s we expanded our MECTIZAN donation program to include prevention of lymphatic filariasis (elephantiasis) in Africa. Today the MECTIZAN program helps 100 million people in 34 countries.

Furthermore, being a leader in antiretroviral therapy against HIV/AIDS our company, in partnership with the government of Botswana and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation could participate in fight against AIDS. We have donated a significant amount of medicines to this country, where one third of adults are HIV positive.

Not only our deeds, but also the philosophy of MSD to help people, were recently awarded the Global Corporate Philanthropy Award by the African Medical and Research Foundation (AMREF), we received the prize with humility and a further commitment to help people who need it.

Michaela Benedikovičová
Connection Editor

We gave streptomycin to the world – in the 1940s it was the first breakthrough treatment for tuberculosis, in the 1940s we also developed the means to mass produce penicillin, in the 1970s a vaccine against meningitis A, C and AC that saved millions of lives. Remember for example, antiretroviral drugs against HIV/ AIDS, or our latest two products – first a cervical cancer vaccine and now a new breakthrough diabetes therapy with sitagliptin that gives hope to patients with type II diabetes. Both innovations were recently awarded significant international „pharmaceutical Oscars“.