



Meeting the Advocacy Challenge for the Health Innovation Ecosystem *Panel Presentation Proceedings*

Wednesday, June 13, 2018
1:30 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.
Sir John A. MacDonald Building
Ottawa, Ontario

- Chair:** **Dr. Ryan Wiley**
Past Chair, Research Canada
President, Shift Health
- Panelists:** **Mr. Peter Brenders**
General Manager, Canada, Sanofi Genzyme
- Mr. Andrew Casey**
President and CEO, BIOTECanada
- Ms. Pamela Fralick**
President, Innovative Medicines Canada
- Dr. Rafi Hofstein**
President and CEO, MaRS Innovation
- Ms. Cynthia Stewart**
Director, R&D Alliances, GE Healthcare Canada

What, in your view, is the greatest imperative for your sector right now and what does your sector require to be a fully engaged partner in Canada's health innovation system?

While it has the potential to radically change the healthcare system for the better, the adoption of new technologies and medicines is a challenging, multistep process that requires a receptive infrastructure to be successful. This receptive infrastructure must involve meaningful dialogue between government and industry as valued partners. The pharmaceutical industry in particular is not currently seen as a valued partner to government and as a result, its industry association is faced with the challenging task of assisting with the cost containment efforts that are a priority



for government while at the same time continuing to advocate for more investment for industry. A receptive infrastructure must also involve some incentive to keep Canadian-developed innovation in Canada. Sanofi Genzyme, for example, is working to bring innovative technologies to healthcare in Canada amidst the false view that new technology is harming Canadians. While the adoption of innovative technologies in Canada is inherently risky, industry leaders such as MaRS Innovation are working to “de-risk” the adoption of innovation at both national and global landscapes. Finally, a receptive infrastructure is also dependent on having highly trained people and talent in Canada. The Canadian life sciences industry must compete globally for talent, and this can be particularly challenging, for example, for small start-up biotechnology companies. In order to be successful in this global market at both keeping talent in Canada and attracting international talent, systems-based public policy that values industry as a valued partner to government and supports health research and innovation is necessary.

Are you of the view that the government (and other sectors for that matter) understand and support your sector’s strategic and necessary role in building a robust health innovation system in Canada? If yes, how are they doing so? If not, what are you doing to foster that understanding? How can other sectors help in this regard?

While government appreciates the role of industry in creating and maintaining a robust health innovation system in Canada and is positively engaging with industry at the individual level, there remains a gap in understanding at a system-wide level. Moreover, this lack of understanding extends to the public and leads to persisting negative views of the “healthcare as business” framework that is necessary for industry. While industry exists in a competitive environment, greater transparency of available data is necessary to educate both government and the public about the important role of industry in the broader health research and innovation ecosystem.

Early technology is seen as an expense for Canada, with inherent risks to developing and adopting innovative technologies and medicines. However, industries continue to invest in Canadian innovation despite these risks. They are willing to invest in early technology that may fail because they are not true failures; the knowledge and experience gained can be applied to new innovative ventures and start-up tech companies. One such company, Enobia is often seen as a failure, but one of its founders went on to sit on the board of another start-up, Clemencia, applying Enobia’s initial knowledge and technology to this new endeavour.

We know that collaborating and coordinating advocacy approaches works well; however, how can these efforts remain high-level without becoming ineffective? And, how can these efforts reinforce specific asks without alienating other partners with whom we are collaborating?

Advocates must work toward developing a cohesive and collaborative message while remaining respectful of the unique perspectives of individual stakeholders, sharing without co-opting the perspectives of others. Individual stakeholders must be allowed to determine the impact of policy decisions for themselves while continually looking for common ground to present a united front to policy-makers. Collaborative efforts, however, are hindered by the siloed nature of the health research and innovation ecosystem, as evidenced by the unsuccessful proposal for a healthcare



Innovation Supercluster. The systems-focused work being done by advocates like Research Canada and at the R8 table that eliminates these silos among stakeholders throughout the ecosystem is vital for successful collaborative advocacy.

Other Key Insights from Audience Questions:

- While the various stakeholders of the health research and innovation ecosystem may be able to agree on the importance of collaborative, coordinated advocacy, we must not lose sight of the fact that these efforts are dependent on having receptors within government. We must continue to work to build and maintain productive, meaningful relationships with the Minister of Health and other key policy-makers.
- Although it is important to keep Canadian tech and innovation in Canada, we must remember that the life sciences industry is developing for a broader, global market.
- Collectively, the health research and innovation community does not believe that it can make a difference. However, excellent advocacy is constantly being done by stakeholders and we must not give up hope.

