

# MOVING BEYOND THE R&D 'BENCH'



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In a highly competitive global market, research and development is a crucial element in driving innovation and success. Even the Government of Canada recognizes this, having invested more than \$800 million in initiatives aimed at encouraging research that will build

a competitive economy for Canada. So why is it, then, that with all this investment, there seems to be so little emphasis placed on ensuring this great research gets into the hands of Canadians, whether it's a new product, device or medicine?

Let's look at the healthcare sector. We know that Canada is often recognized for its high standards in research and development. We have state-of-the-art public sector research facilities and are well-known for our research Centres of Excellence. These high standards lead many healthcare companies to invest heavily in the Canadian research and development (R&D) sector by operating research facilities and conducting clinical trials here.

Amgen Canada is one such company, investing a significant amount in R&D in Canada – around \$60 million annually – and, in 2011, was named one of Canada's Top 100 Corporate Research & Develop-

ment Spenders. Our research facility in Burnaby, BC represents a robust and ongoing investment in the life sciences industry with many of Amgen's proprietary research innovations having been developed or invented there.

However, in terms of healthcare, research and development is just a stepping stone. The bigger challenge is translating this research into innovative new medicines and ensuring these medicines get into the hands of Canadians. Canada's approach to assessing the value of healthcare innovation is causing us to fall behind the rest of the world, particularly when it comes to access by patients to new therapies. We need to improve the delivery of innovative medicines to the patients who need them. So, while much research and development – or 'bench' work – is taking place in Canada, we stumble when bringing that medication to the patient or 'bedside'.

According to Wyatt Health Management's *Rx&D International Report on Access to Medicines*, 2010-2011, Canada ranked 31 out of 32 OECD countries when it came to the number of first-in-class drugs recommended for inclusion in the country's various public drug plans, with a listing average of 38 per cent on public drug plan formularies in Canada. On average, 81.4 per cent of first-in-class drugs are listed in the other OECD countries. As a nation, we rank far behind other countries in the proportion of new drugs recommended for coverage in 13 out of 15 disease areas.

However, as Governments struggle to contain healthcare costs, they are continually looking for ways to measure the cost of new therapies against the anticipated benefit.

For example, benefits such as the economic impact of a new medicine that allows someone to return to work sooner or reduces the burden

on caregivers in the household are not counted because they fall outside the health system. This means that patient convenience, workplace productivity and the burden on family members – which have material and measurable societal and economic benefits – aren't considered in the assessment of a medication's value. In considering this, our current drug evaluation process seems overly simplistic, and negates the wider societal benefits of new healthcare technologies that may ultimately lead to improved patient outcomes and overall health.

In moving beyond drug discovery and taking a lead in ensuring innovative medicines reach and benefit patients, we need to look at new models based on collaboration; ones that take into account broader multiple factors, such as the level of innovation, societal benefits, the severity of the disease and unmet needs.

Revitalizing our approach to

assessing the value of medicine is a shared responsibility and requires collective action. There is tremendous opportunity to build trust and better outcomes by working more closely with Government and academic institutions, fostering better partnerships both at the clinical and patient level, and mutual understanding of the constraints and needs of different stakeholders in the drug review process. Amgen Canada is committed to bringing diverse points of view to Canadians and starting a broad public discussion in an effort to foster change, which is why we sponsor PolicyMatters.ca, an online forum for health system leaders and stakeholders to discuss and debate topics in Canadian health policy.

By working more effectively together, Canada can build a successful model that moves important, innovative medicines faster and more safely from bench to bedside.