



Aventis Pharma Inc. Canada

Product Leadership In Action

Talking with Jean-François Leprince,
President, Aventis Pharma Inc.

Please review your career path to date, leading up to your appointment as president of Aventis Pharma Inc. in Canada.

I began my career in sales with Dow France in 1971, after graduating with a degree in chemical engineering. Six years later, I took on expanded responsibilities

as regional marketing manager for Dow Europe. The chemical company's diversification into pharmaceuticals gave me an opportunity to expand my horizons in 1979, when I joined Dow's pharma subsidiary, Gruppo Lepetit, as general manager for the Benelux. The 1980s took me to Switzerland, where I held top managerial positions, first in Merrell Dow's

From left to right: Christine Chin, Manager, Health Economics; Jean-François Leprince, President; Franca Mancino, Director, Regulatory Affairs and Pharmacovigilance; and Daniel Hébert, Director, Production and Concepts.

Mideast-African operations and, later, in the company's European pharmaceutical business.

I returned to France in late 1989, to serve first as commercial director for Marion Merrell Dow France and soon afterwards as president, a position I held for four years.

Following Hoechst's acquisition of Marion Merrell Dow in 1995, I was appointed general manager of Cassenne-Marion Solymès, one of three operational units of Hoechst Marion Roussel in France. In 1998, I accepted my first North American assignment—president of Hoechst Marion Roussel in Canada—a position I held until 1999, when I became president of the new Aventis Pharma organization in Canada.

Aventis was formed approximately 18 months prior to the last time we spoke in June 2001. How has the company developed since then?

From the outset, our global vision at Aventis has been to create and sustain value by being recognized as a pharmaceutical industry leader. We strive to be valued by patients and health-care providers, sought after as an employer, and respected by the scientific community and by our competitors. I'm happy to say that we have had a great measure of success in Canada on all counts.

In terms of sales, we have consistently experienced double-digit growth in each of the past three years, raising our leadership profile within the industry. In fact, we have now moved into the ranks of the top 10 pharmaceutical companies in Canada and are currently among the fastest growing in this illustrious group.

The success of our products on the Canadian market attests to their perceived value by both patients and health-care providers. We are recognized as leaders in the important therapeutic fields of cardiology and oncology, with our vastly popular products, Altace®, Lovenox®, and Taxotere®. These strategic core products for Aventis are gaining in market share as benefits to patients continue to accrue based on new scientific studies.

As an employer, we have been ranked, for two consecutive years, as one of the 50 best companies to work for, based on a survey conducted by Hewitt Associates for *The Globe and Mail's Report on Business Magazine*. In 2002, we moved up to the 11th rank in all of Canada, and maintained our No. 1 position as the best overall employer in Quebec, where our head office is based.

And, finally, we continue to earn the respect of both our competitors and the scientific community. Some of the country's best and world-renowned clinical researchers are partnering with us to clearly demonstrate, through evidence-based medicine, the value of our products to patients and society as a whole.

You mentioned your ranking as one of the best companies to work for. What makes you different relative to work environment and how you treat your employees?

I believe we differ in the sense that people are really living our company's values.

While each of our values is equally important, I would want to emphasize one in particular: respect for people. One of our predecessor companies espoused the notion that you should treat others as you would like to be treated. Our present day value of "respect for people" is exactly that. For me, it's important that each and every employee has a true sense of his/her individual contribution to the company, because that is key to triggering passionate involvement. I personally derive a great sense of satisfaction when I witness the pride and commitment our employees display in just about everything they do. I have no doubt this is born of their sense of empowerment and ability to network, which we nurture within our value system.

The glue that holds all this together is the emphasis we place on valuing diversity within our company. Canada, by definition, is a diverse country, and we, at Aventis, place a great deal of stock not only in accepting, but deeply appreciating the differences between people.



Jean-François Leprince, President.



Quality control at Aventis begins with the testing of all raw materials and components. Mélanie Caron performs a visual inspection of randomly selected Altace capsules.

Your company has become strongly associated with Altace, which has had remarkable success based on the Heart Outcomes Prevention Evaluation (HOPE) trial results. Can you bring us up-to-date on how this product is doing?

Yes, you are right. Altace, our flagship product, is having tremendous success. It is now the most widely prescribed angiotensin-converting enzyme inhibitor in Canada, with a market share of over 43%. In fact, Altace is now the third top-selling drug in the country. And new studies continue to be released which reinforce the benefits of the drug in staving off major cardiovascular events. One such study is HOPE—The Ongoing Outcomes (HOPE-TOO) presented this past September at the European Society of Cardiology Congress held in Vienna, Austria.

The HOPE-TOO study, a 2.6-year extension of HOPE, was conducted to determine whether the cardiovascular benefits of Altace would persist beyond the 4.5 years originally studied. Results revealed that Altace provided sustained prevention of cardiovascular disease, while also offering incremental reductions in both number of heart attacks and the development of diabetes. These findings are quite relevant, given that cardiovascular disease is responsible for 16 million deaths worldwide each year and is still the leading cause of mortality in the industrialized world.

We are now hearing a lot about Aventis' new diabetes drug, Lantus. What are its attributes and when will it be launched in Canada?

Lantus is a major new addition to the global Aventis diabetes portfolio, and a real advance for patients. We are hoping to launch this product on the Canadian market within the next year. As it is the first basal (long-acting) insulin analog to be introduced in 50 years, and the first 24-hour, long-acting insulin with once-daily administration and glucose-lowering effect, we are understandably quite excited about its potential.

Lantus is a perfect example of a drug that truly addresses an unmet medical need. For the first time, patients will receive continuous release of their medication with just one shot at bedtime. But, in truth, it means much more. Once-daily, 24-hour basal glucose control is extremely important because this can reduce the long-term complications of diabetes, which are debilitating and extremely serious. Such a potential long-term benefit, in addition to the daily convenience and control aspects, will add up to a real sense of patients "conquering" their disease.

This idea of "conquering" a disease is the part I find very rewarding, as it reflects our core purpose so well: Our Challenge is Life...Conquering Disease, One Person at a Time. Every day, people with diabetes who are treated with Lantus will have an improved quality of life. One person at a time, they will be able to realize a measure of control they simply hadn't been able to get before. And physicians who prescribe Lantus will feel they have played a role in improving a patient's life.

You spoke of a very important upcoming launch. Have you launched any new products in Canada recently?

Yes, we just launched a new anti-infective drug, Ketek™, last month for the treatment of community-acquired pneumonia, chronic bronchitis, and tonsillitis/pharyngitis.

Ketek, the first in a new family of antibiotics called ketolides, is an important addition to our portfolio, given that the management of respiratory tract infections is becoming extremely challenging.

In fact, the incidence rate of bacteria considered to be highly resistant to penicillin increased from 0.9% in 1993 to 7% in 2001, according to a study by the Canadian Bacterial Surveillance Network. A Quebec study, published in 2002 in the *Journal of Antimicrobial Chemotherapy*, showed that the resistance of *Streptococcus pneumoniae* (the most common pathogen in community-acquired pneumonia) to commonly prescribed treatments was 20.2% compared to less than 10% a decade ago.

With antibiotic resistance becoming more widespread, Ketek will offer a valuable treatment option that is effective and convenient (*i.e.*, it's a once-daily treatment regimen).

Even though you are a major player in the worldwide pharmaceutical arena, you have established several partnerships with other companies. Why are these necessary and what are the benefits?

Our strategy is to complement our strengths in key Aventis franchises. We want to supplement organic growth through the use of in-licensing and targeted acquisitions, and by entering into co-development and co-commercialization agreements with biotechnology firms and other pharmaceutical companies.

One Canadian success that I can refer to is our co-operation with Procter & Gamble in promoting the osteoporosis agent, Actonel®. In fact, Actonel has turned out to be one of the 10 most successful of all pharmaceutical product launches in Canada since 1995. The product is now well on its way to achieving blockbuster status on a global scale. In Canada alone, we have over 22% of the bisphosphonate market, with a year-over-year growth of 63% in terms of number of prescriptions. Another Canadian example involves the company's collaboration with Inflazyme Pharmaceuticals Ltd. (Vancouver) in the development of high-potential compounds for the treatment of asthma and allergies.

These are just two of the 21 technology alliances and strategic partnerships currently in place at Aventis. Other high-profile partnerships, based on the more advanced stage of the compounds being studied, include our co-operation with Pfizer in the development of Exubera in the treatment of Type 1



Many Aventis employees worked to ensure the successful launch of Ketek. Among them, clockwise from upper left: Luc Bergeron, Professional Education; Stephen Sherman, Regulatory Affairs; Hugo Trudel, Julie Guay, and Richard Grégoire, Marketing; and Jacinte Morel, Market Access Strategic Planning.

and Type 2 diabetes and Genta in the development of Genasense for the treatment of cancer. Exubera represents a new approach in the treatment of diabetes in that the insulin, in a dry powder form, will be delivered by inhalation. As for Genasense, a compound that may enhance the effectiveness of current anticancer treatments by reducing the amount of B-cell leukemia/lymphoma 2 in cancer cells, the future seems promising. A Phase III clinical study released in September showed positive results in patients with advanced malignant melanoma.

It sounds as though Aventis has a lot on its plate. What factors will be instrumental to your success in these endeavours?

I can sum that up in two words: product leadership. In fact, much of what I have been saying is all about our strategy of product leadership. It involves our

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ability not only to discover a steady stream of innovative and value-adding compounds through the best science, cutting-edge technology, and strategic alliances, but also our ability to maximize the value of existing and new global brands. This is done through sustained investments and by continually expanding the utility of the brands through proactive life cycle management.

The comments I made earlier regarding Altace, Actonel, Ketek, and Lantus are good examples of how we are putting our product leadership strategy into action at the local level. The bottom line is about focusing our efforts on areas that address serious medical needs, where we can make a real difference in patients' lives. **CPM**



Gervais Couture, Industrial Operations, watches as bottles of Altace roll off the packaging line at the Aventis facility in Laval, Quebec. Altace is the company's flagship product.

Discover the Strength within.

Building People, Process, Products

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Marketing Strategies

New Business Development

Direct to Audience Communications

Sales Force Planning & Analysis

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