

Key messages and conclusions from the Conference

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The 6th WSMI Asia Pacific Regional Conference is coming towards the last stages, and although there are important sessions tomorrow in the Regulators' Forum and Business Workshop, this is a good moment to reflect on the **key messages and conclusions** of the conference.

I am sure you will agree with me that the programme has been a rich one, and we have been honoured to have presentations from a distinguished set of speakers from China, the Asia Pacific Region, and around the World.

When we were planning this conference, this was the mix that we were aiming for. Firstly, to have a focus on China. China is a rapidly rising country of global importance and has a rapidly developing economy and healthcare system. Secondly, this is a Regional Conference, and the Asia Pacific Region is one of rich country diversity. This means that there is the great opportunity for sharing understanding about what is the same in other countries, and what is different. No-one would say that any one country anywhere in the world has all the answers when it comes to healthcare or medicines or the OTC/self-medication sector. So this conference has also been a great opportunity to share some interesting developments in the Region and also from the rest of the world.

That was the general purpose of the programme. Let me just briefly remind you of the different sessions we have had.

In the Opening Session after warm 'Welcomes', we were honoured to receive the keynote speech from Mr Zheng Xiaoyu, the Commissioner of the Chinese State Food and Drug Administration. The Commissioner shared with us the latest policy developments in the healthcare and medicines sector, and updated us on the Classified Drug Administration System. Following this keynote speech, we were privileged to hear from Mr Yao Hong, the Director-General of the Department of Medical Insurance in the Ministry of Labor and Social Security. We were also pleased to have a representative from the World Health Organisation share some important thoughts with us.

In the 1st session we heard from one of the leaders of the world industry, Mr. Ulf Wiinberg, about the trends and drivers in self-medication, around the world. This set the scene nicely for overviews of self-medication in the Region's three biggest markets – Japan, China and Korea, from Mr. Ibe, Mr. Tian and Dr Lee.

In the 2nd session the discussion and presentations were more focused on the regulatory dimension that is so important to our industry. We are honoured to have with us Regulators from a number of Regulatory Agencies, and in this session we heard from Ms Yan Min, Mr Slater, Dr Peterson and Mr Furusawa. This again included Japan and China, but also introduced another of the important countries in the region – Australia, and gave some additional perspectives from outside the Region – from Canada.

In the Asia Pacific Region perhaps more than anywhere else in the world an important part is played in self-care by Traditional Medicines and Food supplements and Tonics. So the 3rd session was dedicated to broader healthcare approaches with presentations from Professor Zhang Bin, Mr Zhu Fujiang and Mr Sato. In this area, newly emerging and developing regulations are key, and we had key contributions from regulators Dr Keller on European Union Developments and Dr Briggs on the Australian view.

This morning, in the 4th session we changed direction and looked at self-medication from the patient and consumer or user's perspective, with some fascinating and detailed insight into Chinese attitudes and behaviours presented by Mr Tom Doctoroff and Mr Davis Wu.

Now quite a lot of what we covered by this stage was particularly a description of where we have got to in self-medication in the region. What are the country situations, regulatory developments, therapeutic

preferences, patient and consumer attitudes and so on. In the 5th session we changed emphasis a little to look at some examples of new developments in other parts of the world, to give insight into some of the possible trends of the future. We heard extensively from independent medical doctors from the USA, Dr Henneken, Dr Lipsky and Dr Coble, on their perspectives on self-care in general and on the important areas of respiratory and cardiovascular health. We also heard how increasingly products are being switched around the world, from Dr Jessamine of New Zealand and Ms Seifert of Australia.

Finally, in the first session of this afternoon, the 6th session, we have heard from a range of speakers on different aspects of the relationship between the self-care industry, pharmacists and patients and consumers. Presentations from Mr Hoek, Dr Suydam and Mr Shao Songqi all explored in different ways the current and future roles of the pharmacist, and Mr Cheah and Mr Wiinberg presented on different aspects of communication and business development.

As I said at the start, a rich programme. Of course it would be impossible and inappropriate for me to re-present the content of the many important presentations we have received. But bringing it all together I can offer some messages and conclusions, the key messages and conclusions that I have taken from this conference.

Firstly, and overall, self-medication throughout the world is on the rise. Patients are taking a greater interest in their health and assuming more responsibility for their own care. The global self-medication market is responding – products are more available and there is greater utilization. Increasingly, healthcare professionals – doctors, pharmacists and even nurses, are playing different roles than in the past, roles that support and encourage self care. Regulation is evolving at the same time, encouraging the development of, and regulating access to, safe and effective medicines for the self-care consumer.

So my first key message and conclusion is that there is a universal positive development of self-medication in every country in the Region, and in fact in every country around the world. The state or stage of development varies enormously, but the point is that it is all going in the same positive direction. We can draw this conclusion from the number of delegates we have seen at the conference; from the presentations from all the stakeholders present here; from the seniority of the presenters; and from the content of the presentations. Not least has been the positive disposition towards self-medication that we have heard from the Regulators from many different countries, from WHO, and from the healthcare professionals.

One universal rule to which there are no exceptions is that there is never enough money for healthcare. Government social-funded systems are under huge budget pressure around the world. Private insurance systems cover only a minority of people and a proportion of costs, leaving people to pay for healthcare out of their own pockets. *It is now clear that self-care and self-medication can make an important contribution – improving patient health, reducing (costly) risks, reducing costs to healthcare budgets.* And, to me, that's another key message and conclusion.

Worldwide, we are seeing the *reinforcement* of the regulatory classification of products into two classes: prescription and non-prescription. Our keynote speaker, the Commissioner of the SFDA, shared with us the developments in this in China. Going on from this, we heard from a number of different presenters the opportunity presented by the switching of products from prescription status to OTC status. There are now many countries where there is good evidence to support the safe and effective use of products without for self-medication. I don't think I would be exaggerating to say that a key message and conclusion is that *there are a good many OTC and switch opportunities in every country, bringing benefits to patients everywhere.*

Still on the subject of regulation, patients benefit from products based on a high level of evidence-based data on their efficacy and safety. And it is important that *regulation of the market is strong but transparent, explicit and fair - consistency or harmonization in classification, switch and regulation is valuable.*

As the world becomes an aging world, and countries become wealthier we are seeing what is called the 'demographic transition'. This is in countries where the burden of disease stops being from communicable diseases, but becomes predominantly from non-communicable diseases. Healthcare systems around the

world are having to change from providing 'acute sickness services' for communicable diseases to a chronic care of non-communicable diseases future. Consequently we have heard in several of the presentations *about chronic disease areas that are being seen as important in self care, a particular example being the cardiovascular area*. As we saw, China is forecast to have one of the highest growth rates in the world in heart diseases; at the same time we heard there is much that the individual can do for themselves, in self-care, to minimize the risk. Clearly *the opportunity for self-care in new treatment or disease areas* is one of the messages and conclusions from the conference.

On the subject of choice, it is clear from the presentations on alternative approaches *that patients benefit from having a wide range of products available, from 'Western' OTCs to Traditional Medicines to Nutritional Supplements and Tonics*.

We all have a part to play in realizing the potential of self-care and self-medication, as individual consumers and occasionally patients ourselves, and as people involved in the healthcare sector. From an industry perspective, we believe that *consumers and patients should have open access to products for self-medication and self-care through pharmacies, and as appropriate in country-specific circumstances, through other channels. We believe that products be of high quality, should be well labeled and that information about products be made available in a properly controlled and professional way*. I believe these sentiments have clearly emerged from the various industry presenters in the last couple of days.

Companies in industry are rightly in competition with each other. Rightly not least because competition and choice in competitive marketplaces produces patient benefits. At the same time whether you work for a Chinese company, or a Japanese or Korean company, or an industry association, we can work together in promoting these standards, with the common aim of better healthcare for all. This conference is an illustration of our common agendas.

Another key message and conclusion from the conference, I believe is that self-care and self-medication does not and should not occur in any way in isolation from the healthcare professionals such as physicians. I don't think that anybody could disagree from the several presentations of the physicians and physicians representatives at the conference, *that doctors are recognising the benefit and contribution that self-care can make, and can support it constructively as a foundation or fundamental level of healthcare*.

The other healthcare professional group that we have heard from extensively at this conference is the pharmacy profession. *Pharmacists have a unique opportunity and position in which to become ever more involved in helping consumers and patients in looking after themselves*.

Overall, it seems to me that there is a new recognition of the important contribution that self-medication and self-care can make to the health of people in the Region. This is a shared recognition between the regulatory authorities, healthcare professionals, industry, and patients and consumers. And it is *leading to all stakeholders working together towards our one common aim: better health for all*. And from the industry perspective – the constituency I represent - as it says in the conference brochure, "An historical opportunity exists today for domestic Chinese companies, for international companies, and for multinational companies alike."

There may be other messages and conclusions than these 9 that I have chosen, that each of you have taken from this conference. In fact I'm sure there are, and I hope there are, other things you will have drawn from these sessions, that I haven't been able to cover. So where do we go from here? Well, I have to leave that to the next speaker, my distinguished former WSMI chairman, and industry leader, Mr Uehara.

Lastly, while I have the opportunity, I'd like to thank on behalf of WSMI all our speakers who have come from all over the world to be with us at this conference. I'd also like to pay tribute to our hosts, the Chinese Self-Medication Industry Association in organizing this conference. I'm sure you will agree with me that Mr Zhang Heyong and Mr Hu Shengyu have done a tremendous job in the challenging work of arranging a large international conference. Thank you to them, and thank you to you all.