

The Global Roundtable Series

November 2011 - Dublin, Ireland

Acknowledging a need to better understand the role of the private sector in fighting the global cancer burden, the Union for International Cancer Control (UICC) and the World Economic Forum (the Forum) co-hosted a roundtable side event at the recent World Cancer Leaders' Summit in Dublin, Ireland. The panel discussion was designed to highlight the ways in which the private sector can help to mobilise the commitments made by Member States in the Political Declaration, from the UN Summit on Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs).



Article No. 37 of the Political Declaration on the Prevention and Control of Non-Communicable Diseases, states: "Engage non-health actors and key stakeholders, where appropriate, including (...) the private sector and civil society, in collaborative partnerships to promote health and to reduce non-communicable disease risk factors, including through building community capacity in promoting healthy diets and lifestyles."

The top 'take-home' messages from the discussion

1. Building effective partnerships is key

The Political Declaration on NCDs highlights the need to have a whole-of-society approach to address cancer and the other NCDs. UICC and the Forum strongly believe that addressing cancer and other NCDs must involve greater cooperation and partnership between public, NGO and private sectors. Cooperation is required in addressing risk factors, improving early detection, enhancing primary and secondary healthcare and creating a health infrastructure able to deliver cancer treatment effectively. The discussion highlighted the view that the private sector is willing and able to partner with organisations as committed as they are to address a problem which has significant long-term economic and social impact. In addition to developing products and services which reduce cancer risk factors or improve cancer treatment, the private sector has skills and resources that can help the public sector and NGOs deliver their own ambitions. Equally, NGOs can play an important role in helping the private sector understand the impact it can have on the health of society. There are already many great examples of NGOs working in partnership with the private sector on health issues, and the panel concluded that there is much more that can be done in a transparent and open way to fight cancer.

2. Business is part of the solution

The panel considered the issue of "conflict of interest" (COI) which causes much debate in the NGO sector with some NGOs suggesting that not-for-profit organisations should be cautious when entering a partnership with a for-profit organisation. The panel consensus was that conflicts of interest exist in all partnerships, but with careful management, a good degree of transparency, honesty and openness, there is much which can be achieved without placing organisations in the partnership at reputational risk. There is a lot of common ground between those companies developing treatments for cancer and NGOs delivering cancer services in-country and we should focus on what can be done effectively in partnership to reduce cancer incidence and mortality, managing the issue of COI professionally at all times.

3. Developing countries need to be involved in planning

It was agreed that more thought needs to be given to the issue of delivering cancer drugs and technologies to developing countries beyond narrow discussions around pricing and intellectual property. For example, in developing new cancer drugs, design should include consideration of the unique delivery, transport and storage issues faced by low- and middle-income countries (LMICs). Also, increasing the number and use of radiotherapy machines in LMICs is dependent on the availability of trained staff - a significant opportunity for partnership arrangements.

4. The private sector is key to promoting a healthy workforce

Employers are uniquely positioned to improve health as they have access to over 50% of the world's population through the workplace(1). A healthy workforce is a more productive workforce. The panel concurred that the private sector has a vested interest and responsibility to promote employee health and in so doing, send a clear message to others that health is a core issue for them. Many companies are taking steps to promote tobacco-free workplaces, incentivise regular cancer screening and promote a healthy lifestyle through diet and exercise - a clear opportunity for NGOs and the private sector to work together.

Moderators

- Cary Adams, CEO, Union for International Cancer Control
- Doug Ulman, President / CEO, Lance Armstrong Foundation

Panelists

- Tim Guertin, CEO, Varian Medical Systems
- John Harrington, Vice President, Chief Commercial Officer, Sanofi Oncology
- Jorge Otero, Vice President, Clinical Development Oncology, Asia Pacific - Japan and Emerging Markets, GlaxoSmithKline
- Elisabet de los Pinos, Founder and CEO, Aura Biosciences
- Derek Yach, Senior Vice President, Global Health and Agriculture Policy, PepsiCo

“ Success in delivering radiotherapy technology rests on a studied, adequately resourced health workforce, therefore our success depends on our ability to partner with NGOs and government agencies in low- and middle-income countries. ”

Tim Guertin, CEO, Varian Medical Systems



“ Focusing on pharmaceutical supply for developing countries needs a sustainable perspective, moving beyond pricing to also consider all aspects that affect patient access, including health infrastructure, workforce education, and public perception. ”

Jorge Otero, Vice President, Clinical Development Oncology, GlaxoSmithKline



“ As an entrepreneur in a globalised world, we have an obligation to ensure that our innovation has global reach and relevance beyond just the US and developed countries. ”

Elisabeth de los Pinos, Founder and CEO, Aura Biosciences



“ It is important to involve the private sector in the policy consultation process in order to achieve an effective regulatory framework and a participatory environment for collaboration. Expecting the private sector to only passively implement public policy is simply short sighted, as equally, the public sector should not be expected to implement policies and strategies developed by the private sector without their early engagement. ”

Derek Yach, Senior Vice President of Global Health and Agriculture Policy, PepsiCo

“ The UN Summit on NCDs changed the game. We now have, for the first time, the engagement of governments, the private sector and NGOs on a set of diseases which can only be addressed by finding new and innovative ways to work together on something we feel passionate about – reducing cancer deaths. ”

John J. Harrington, Vice President, Chief Commercial Officer, Sanofi Oncology

The Global Roundtable Series

UICC's Global Roundtable Series is a sequence of private events, which gather leaders in key cities around the world to discuss the most pressing issues in the cancer community.

Upcoming events:

- February 2012, Roundtable Discussion as part of World Cancer Day activities
- May 2012, Roundtable Discussion to coincide with the World Health Assembly, Geneva

Notes

1. World Health Organization and World Economic Forum (2008): Preventing Non-Communicable Diseases in the Workplace through Diet and Physical Activity.