

Millennium marketer sprints ahead

Ryan Cohlhepp, whom Takeda recently promoted to head of US marketing for Millennium, is hurrying up the corporate ladder. The 36-year-old got his start in pharma with Roche, which recruited him into a six-year leadership training program for MBAs—never mind that Cohlhepp, then finishing his PharmD at Purdue, didn't have an MBA.

"It was a process where you go in without any kind of business training, any experience on the commercial side of the business, and they throw you into the deep end of the pool," says Cohlhepp, a triathlete who's a pretty good swimmer.

Roche rotated him through three two-year assignments—first in market research on Rocephin, then in field sales, and finally in US marketing (Rocephin again) and a global stint for a Phase III product (Mir-cera, for renal anemia).

By 2005, Cohlhepp was logging a lot of miles in global marketing—he was out of the country 108 days that year. With his first child on the way, the Marion, IN native looked for less road-intensive opportunities in the Midwest and landed at Takeda, just outside of Chicago. There he took on responsibility for the oncology portfolio in new product planning.

"We had a number of early-stage compounds but nothing in clinical trials," he says. "Because the oncology portfolio was so thin, in order to accelerate that, we really took a pretty aggressive look from a business development perspective. We set a target for ourselves and said: What is it going to take for us to achieve that? And what we got to ultimately was that it was going to require the acquisition of a fully operational oncology business."

Millennium seemed a perfect fit. Takeda assembled a small team, including Cohlhepp, to work on the acquisition,

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Ryan Cohlhepp

Senior Director, Head of US Marketing, Millennium: The Takeda Oncology Company

2006–2008

Senior manager, new product planning, Takeda

2004–2006

International product manager, Roche

2003–2004

US product manager, Rocephin, Roche

completed in 2008 at a cost of nearly \$9 billion. Instead of taking the compounds and shelving the rest, Takeda took pains to preserve the Millennium braintrust, granting their staff a hefty retention bonus and a measure of autonomy while consolidating Takeda's oncology operations into Millennium's Cambridge headquarters.

"We paid \$9 billion for Millennium because it was an organization full of people who knew how to develop and commercialize oncology drugs," says Cohlhepp, "and we knew that if they walked out the door, that premium was walking out with them."

Cohlhepp and his wife moved the family out east, and he left the commercial organization for a role in development, as team leader on the company's prostate cancer franchise (Orteronel, or TAK-700, a novel non-steroidal androgen synthesis inhibitor, is in Phase III clinical trials, with two big global studies underway).

As senior director/head of US marketing, a role he assumed in June, he's responsible for US marketing of Velcade, for multiple myeloma, as well as a late-stage pipeline including three Phase III drugs, including Orteronel, an oral proteasome inhibitor (MLN9708) for multiple myeloma and an Aurora kinase inhibitor for percutaneous T-cell lymphoma (MLN8237).

He's also got a growing family on his hands, with a four-year-old, a six-year-old and a third due any minute now. He's a fitness freak, partly due to the same family health history that pushed him into the healthcare industry.

"I grew up as a very large child," he says. "By my junior year in college, I was up to 350 pounds." That year, his father, then 46, suffered a heart attack and had bypass surgery. His father's father had died at the age of 52.

"I knew I needed to do something different with my life or I was going to end up on that same table," says Cohlhepp, who went on to lose 150 pounds, compete in a half-Iron Man triathlon (70.3 miles) and, well, head up US marketing at one of biotech's brightest stars. — Matthew Arnold



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