

## Review of the 2nd Asia Pacific Regulatory Compliance Congress and Best Practices Forum

Shanghai, China, September 11<sup>th</sup> – 13<sup>th</sup> 2012

Prior to attending the Second Asia Pacific Pharmaceutical and Medical Devices Regulatory Compliance Congress and Best Practices Forum in Shanghai, I had not been in the region since leaving AstraZeneca (AZ) in late 2009. I was looking forward to meeting up with former colleagues, and seeing what has changed in the region during my 3-year absence. I was not disappointed.

During my time with AstraZeneca, many ex-patriots from western nations, Australia and New Zealand were employed to help set the tone for compliance within each country. This was mainly because AZ, like all multi-national companies, found it difficult at that time to recruit local employees who really understood the issues from both the local and global perspectives. I was pleasantly surprised to note the high proportion of speakers and moderators from the region. This gave the conference a much more locally focused view than would otherwise have been possible. I understand that, to enable the sharing of best practices, it is important to include international speakers on the agenda for conferences in each region. However, the majority of speakers should come from the region where the conference is held. This was definitely the case at the Shanghai conference, and is one piece of evidence for the extent to which the region has progressed since my last visit.

One of the most important features of any region is how homogenous the countries within the region are on a variety of measures. In terms of Transparency International's Corruption Perception Index (CPI)<sup>1</sup>, Asia Pacific has the greatest contrasts of any region in the world. Countries such as New Zealand, Singapore and Australia lead the region with scores between 9.5 (the highest score of any country in 2011) and 8.8, whilst Myanmar and North Korea struggle at the bottom with scores of just 1.5 and 1.0 (joint lowest with Somalia) respectively. However, what is equally important is what the countries are doing, both generally to fight corruption, and specifically within our industry. Throughout this conference, we were given many examples of what countries are doing to improve various aspects of compliance within the industry, including the introduction of stronger industry codes of practice in many Asian countries.

During the opening keynote address of the conference (given by Eric Baclet, President and General Manager of Lilly China), we heard that patients in China can wait up to nine hours for just 10 minutes with a doctor, and that people sell legitimate numbered tickets to enable people to jump the queue. We also heard that many aspects of the current mechanisms of healthcare delivery have caused anger and violent backlash against healthcare professionals, leading to incidents such as a Beijing doctor receiving 17 stab wounds in a recent knife attack. Apparently, this type of incident is becoming more common. It is therefore vital that the industry and healthcare professionals work together to improve the quality of healthcare delivery, and to improve public perceptions of the quality of care that they receive.

In addition to the specific examples for the region, there were also some common themes that persist globally, such as the fight against bribery and corruption, the need to build compliance

---

<sup>1</sup> For more information about Transparency International and their work, go to <http://www.transparency.org/>, or to view the 2011 Corruption Perceptions Index, go to <http://www.transparency.org/whatwedo/publications> and select the review. CPI scores are out of a maximum of 10 with scores of 5 and below indicating "a serious corruption problem". The highest score in the 2011 Index was 9.5, achieved by New Zealand.

programmes on ethical values to gain competitive advantage, and the difficulties in ensuring that all employees understand the same messages from their training. This last point is a particular problem for those Asian economies that are experiencing rapid growth as turnover of key staff (including medical representatives) can be as high as 35%.

Another great feature of the conference was the focus of the breakout sessions within the region, including some country-specific sessions. I was especially impressed that the Myanmar (Burma) session was a plenary, rather than breakout, session. When James Finch of DFDL began his talk on Myanmar with a story about going to see the former home of Rudyard Kipling where the great author wrote "The Jungle Book", I did wonder where it would end. James concluded that since Kipling had never lived in Myanmar and wrote "The Jungle Book" in Vermont, like everything else in Myanmar, many sources of information, an open mind, and reliable local contacts are needed to get to the truth of any story!

The closing keynote address (given by Mark Mallon, Regional Vice President Asia Pacific and President China, AstraZeneca) began with the statement that "there is nothing more important than helping physicians to prescribe the right medicines for their patients in compliance with the codes of practice". Mark noted that the \$20 billion in fines that our industry has paid to the US government over the last six years was money that could have gone towards patient care. He went on to say that it needs companies and healthcare professionals to work together to implement new laws and codes of practice to get the best possible outcomes for patients. Mark, like Eric in his opening keynote address, said many of the right things for an audience of compliance officers, and also convinced me that he believed them. This was powerful medicine indeed. However, it would be even more powerful if the multi-national companies trusted a "local pair of hands" with the task of leading their businesses in the region. That would truly convince me that the region has indeed made huge progress towards full compliance with international laws, codes of conduct, and public expectations.

Perhaps the most inspirational session of the conference, in my opinion, was led by Karen Eryou of UCB China, who talked about how she has overturned the perception of the compliance team as "the sales prevention department". This did not happen overnight; it took a long time and a lot of hard work by Karen and her team members to help people to understand what they needed to do to be compliant, and perhaps more importantly, why this was needed. I found Karen's approach refreshing and collaborative in a role that has the potential to be hugely confrontational. Karen is also a big fan of having the right data to facilitate monitoring, and answer tricky questions. Again, it has not been quick or easy to develop the data needed to help Karen's business colleagues to understand their greatest risks, but she has found it rewarding.

Some people attended the conference via the live broadcast links, which is a great solution when money for travel expenses is tight. However, there really is no substitute for attending a conference in person with your peers and industry experts, so that you can discuss problems face to face, and break down the potential isolation that people in compliance and related roles can feel.

In addition to attending the conference, I decided to take a short side trip to Xi'an to see the Terracotta Warriors before returning home. It was definitely worth the trip and I would recommend anyone who has at least a full day to spare in China to visit Xi'an, which is an interesting city in its own right, not just as the gateway to the Warriors. My other good decision on this trip was to hire a government-approved guide who gave me lots of background information and really brought the Warriors to life for me.

To find out more about PCF, their website is [www.pharmacomplianceforum.org](http://www.pharmacomplianceforum.org). To find out more about the Asia Pacific Pharmaceutical Compliance congresses, including how to get copies of the congress presentations, the congress website is [www.asianpharmacongress.com](http://www.asianpharmacongress.com).

**Sue Egan MBA, Director, Sue Egan Associates Limited, [Editor@SueEgan.co.uk](mailto:Editor@SueEgan.co.uk)**



Sue has been a Compliance Officer at all levels from single marketing company and European Compliance Officer for GlaxoSmithKline (GSK) to international VP for AstraZeneca (AZ). At GSK, Sue established the Risk Management and Compliance Board for the UK marketing company under the leadership of the UK Finance Director. As GSK's European Compliance Officer, she gained a reputation for a pragmatic approach by providing practical help and guidance to Marketing Company Presidents who were keen to manage their compliance risks effectively. As VP Compliance for AZ's International Sales and Marketing Organisation, Sue was responsible for ensuring compliance in every country in which AZ had commercial operations except the USA and Canada.

In January 2010, Sue established the management consultancy, Sue Egan Associates Limited, specialising in Corporate Governance, Compliance, Risk Management and Change Management. Sue works with clients in various sectors (life sciences companies, charities, a government agency, and other industries) to help them find innovative ways to conduct business ethically and sustainably.