

## FOSTERING HEALTHY AND TRANSPARENT COLLABORATION BETWEEN PHARMACEUTICAL COMPANIES AND THE KOSOVO DOCTORS CHAMBER



The health care system is a complex ecosystem where various stakeholders work together to ensure the wellbeing of patients. Among these stakeholders, pharmaceutical companies and the Chambers of Health Professionals (CHP) in general and especially the Kosovo Doctors Chamber (KDC), play the main role in advancing medical science, providing healthcare solutions and improving patient outcomes. However, the cooperation between these subjects has often been viewed with suspicion for a possible conflict of interest and lack of transparency, contrary to the obvious necessity of such cooperation. This is precisely where the need arises for the creation of a legal and ethical basis for the promotion and support of a healthy and transparent cooperation between pharmaceutical companies and CHPs, emphasizing the importance of such cooperation in the continuous effort to improve the quality of healthcare.

### The role of pharmaceutical companies and the Doctors Chamber

Pharmaceutical companies are at the forefront of medical innovation by continually investing in scientific research and developing new medicines and therapies that can alleviate suffering and save lives. Their role in healthcare is undeniable, as they bring vital medicines and vaccines to market, treating diseases that affect millions but also rare diseases that affect far fewer individuals with far fewer treatment options.

On the other hand, the Kosovo Doctors Chamber (KDC) is an independent professional organization in which doctors practicing medicine in the Republic of Kosovo are members and licensed. The KDC serves as a professional body brought together by physicians, healthcare providers and experts in various medical disciplines. They establish and uphold ethical standards within the medical community, provide continuing education, and provide guidance on best practices. Medical chambers are essential to maintaining the integrity of the health care profession and ensuring that patients receive the highest quality care.

Figuratively, the role of these two actors of the health ecosystem resembles two rivers flowing in the same direction – in the best possible interest of patient health, mixing along the way several times, until they flow together into the sea of patient health. These meeting points in reality naturally create cooperation needs.

### Need for cooperation

More than anywhere else, the naturalness but also the necessity of cooperation between pharmaceutical companies and CHPs is reflected in the need for scientific research and development of medicines, therapeutic products

and diagnostic equipment. Pharmaceutical companies rely on the expertise of healthcare professionals to conduct clinical trials and gather valuable insights into the safety and efficacy of their products. The KDC can facilitate this collaboration by ensuring that research is conducted ethically and transparently. So far, in the absence of a legal basis that would regulate clinical scientific research, there has been no such cooperation between the KDC and any Pharmaceutical Company present in Kosovo. However, this does not mean that tomorrow the Kosovar health ecosystem will not be a source of scientific data of global value.

More than anywhere else, the need for cooperation between Pharmaceutical Companies and the KDC is felt in the field of continuing professional education and training of doctors. The KDC provides a functional platform for pharmaceutical companies to educate healthcare professionals about new treatments and therapies. This education directly contributes to improved patient care by updating physicians with firsthand experience in the latest medical advances. This does not happen only in specific thematic meetings, organized directly and in direct cooperation. Such education and training is developed also through the organization of Congresses, Symposia, Seminars, Conferences, and other scientific events, where Pharmaceutical Companies present the latest discoveries and innovations in the field of treatment or diagnostics, together with their applicability in the daily work of doctors.

All this cooperation is often viewed with suspicion, especially in healthcare systems in transition, where conflict of interest arise more easily. Therefore, the close and transparent cooperation between the KDC and pharmaceutical companies must guarantee the ethical supervision of the cooperation processes. Cooperation with the KDC can and should provide pharmaceutical companies with ethical guidance and oversight, helping them to fully avoid potential conflicts of interest by ensuring that their marketing and promotional activities comply with medical ethics.

Ethical supervision is primarily about patient protection. Both pharmaceutical companies and the KDC share a common goal of improving patient outcomes. Collaboration in initiatives such as disease awareness campaigns and patient education, can enhance patient care and support. These activities, organized together by these two shareholders, have a much greater impact and effect than the same activities organized independently.

Throughout this wide range of cooperation, transparency and accountability of each party

is essential. A transparent collaborative framework can help build trust between stakeholders, including patients and the public. This framework ensures that interactions between pharmaceutical companies and the KDC are open, accountable and free of undue influence or conflicts of interest.

#### Creating a healthy and transparent collaboration between Roche-Kosova and KDC

In order to encourage and support a healthy and transparent cooperation between pharmaceutical companies, in this case the Hoffmann-La Roche LTD Company Representative Office in Kosovo and the KDC, the needs described above have been strictly respected, taking into account the clear instructions, previously agreed upon. Based on the internal regulations of both parties, and in order to ensure long and fruitful cooperation, we have developed clear guidelines and codes of conduct that describe the expectations and responsibilities of both parties in cooperation. These guidelines emphasize transparency, ethical behavior, and the best interests of patients.

In order for collaborative activities to be reviewed and monitored in an independent and objective manner, we have created independent supervisory committees, as in the case of the implementation of the recently signed Memorandum of Cooperation. Through this independent oversight, we will ensure that collaborative activities meet ethical standards and do not compromise patient care.

At KDC Congresses and Conferences we have endeavored to continuously provide educational programs and training opportunities for healthcare professionals to improve their understanding of the pharmaceutical industry, its products, benefits, and potential risks associated with new treatments. Thanks to healthy and transparent cooperation, this education and training has produced a direct and tangible effect in advancing the quality of care for patients in Kosovo.

Our cooperation is based on constant exchange of information. The promotion of open and transparent communication between the Hoffmann-La Roche LTD Company and KDC has not only facilitated the exchange of scientific and medical knowledge but has also enabled the assessment and detection of doctors' needs for continuous professional development.

The focus of all these efforts and such cooperation has been and remains on the patient and their needs. Therefore, patient involvement naturally remains a natural necessity of any collaboration. Common difficulties such as identifying the typical representative patient or relevant patient groups and organizations, are no different from those in other countries. However, critical to this effort is the shared awareness that the inclusion of patient advocacy groups and patient representatives in collaborative efforts, is necessary to ensure that patient perspectives and needs are considered throughout the process.

#### Conclusion

There is no doubt that collaboration between pharmaceutical companies and the KDC is essential to advancing healthcare, fostering medical innovation and improving patient outcomes. However, our experience as the Hoffmann-La Roche LTD Company in collaborations with the KDC, proves that to ensure the integrity and transparency of such collaborations, clear guidelines, ethical oversight and commitment to the best interests of patients are essential. By working together in a responsible and transparent way, as two of the most important actors, we can contribute significantly to the advancement of the quality of healthcare in Kosovo, but also the protection of the interest of patients and the integrity of health professionals.

