

MEHRDAD DOUSTDAR

MANAGING DIRECTOR
MERCK SHARP & DOHME



Mehrdad Doustdar has been associated with Merck Sharp & Dohme (MSD) practically all his professional life. Before becoming Managing Director of the Czech branch of MSD, he worked for almost three years as the Business Unit Director Hospital and Specialty and additionally also led the Vaccines Unit at MSD in Germany. Prior to that, he gained experience in various positions at MSD in Austria and Switzerland as well as in the regional and global management of the company. He studied business management at the Wirtschaftsuniversität in Vienna, Austria, and at the University of St. Gallen, Switzerland. He has been a member of the Czech Association of Innovative Pharmaceutical Industry (AIFP) Board of Directors since December 2023. In December 2025, he was elected Chair of the AIFP Board.

SHAPING THE NEXT CHAPTER OF MSD IN SLOVAKIA: MEET THE INCOMING MANAGING DIRECTOR

YOU ARE TAKING OVER THE ROLE OF MANAGING DIRECTOR OF MSD IN SLOVAKIA THIS MAY, WHILE CONTINUING AS MANAGING DIRECTOR OF MSD CZECH REPUBLIC. HOW DO YOU SEE THIS NEW CHAPTER?

It is both an honor and a responsibility. In the coming weeks, my first priority will be to listen – to better understand the specific needs of the Slovak healthcare environment, the challenges faced by patients, healthcare professionals and policymakers, and the expectations of our partners. At the same time, Slovakia is not an unfamiliar landscape to me. As a native Austrian and someone who has already spent some years in the Czech Republic, I have followed developments in the region closely and understand many of the shared historical, cultural and systemic contexts.

Slovakia and the Czech Republic face very similar structural challenges, from demographic ageing to the growing burden of chronic diseases and increasing pressure on public budgets. My ambition is therefore to build on proven experience from Czechia, while fully respecting local specificities, and together with Slovak partners translate that experience into tangible benefits for patients, the healthcare system and society.

WHAT DOES THIS DUAL LEADERSHIP BRING IN TERMS OF LEADERSHIP, CULTURE AND BUSINESS IMPACT?

Leading across both markets creates an opportunity to think strategically about impact rather than scale alone. It allows us to share expertise, leadership experience and best practices, while also creating space for further investments and faster delivery of innovation. Over the years, I have held various leadership roles across functions and markets, and one lesson stands out: sustainable success always starts with people and culture.

Creating an environment where teams feel trusted, empowered and purpose driven is essential – not only for business performance, but for meaningful impact on patients. Combining local insight with regional experience also allows us to engage more effectively with stakeholders and support a strong and diversified pipeline of innovation.

YOU HAVE OFTEN HIGHLIGHTED THE BROADER VALUE OF INVESTING IN HEALTHCARE. WHY IS THIS PERSPECTIVE IMPORTANT TODAY?

Because healthcare decisions shape far more than clinical outcomes. Strategic investments in prevention, innovation and timely access to effective treatment generate long term value – healthier populations, higher productivity and greater economic resilience. Across

Europe, we see that countries taking a long term perspective on health tend to be better prepared for future challenges. Health should be viewed as a pillar of sustainable development, not only as a short term budget item.

AS YOU STEP INTO THE SLOVAK MARKET, WHERE DO YOU SEE THE GREATEST OPPORTUNITY TO MAKE A MEANINGFUL IMPACT IN THE HEALTHCARE SYSTEM? AND WHERE WOULD YOU LIKE TO FOCUS YOUR ATTENTION FIRST?

Slovakia faces many of the same pressures we see across the region – a growing burden of chronic diseases, an ageing population and increasing strain on the healthcare system. This also means there is a significant opportunity to shift the focus more strongly toward areas that can deliver long term impact.

One such area is prevention. Vaccination, screenings and early diagnosis can fundamentally change disease trajectories, particularly in oncology and chronic conditions. Beyond saving lives, prevention helps avoid complications that place long term pressure on both healthcare and social systems. Strengthening prevention is therefore one of the most effective ways to improve outcomes while supporting sustainability.

At the same time, innovation and data play a critical role in making healthcare systems more effective. Advanced analytics and real world data help move decision making from reactive responses toward more predictive and targeted approaches. At MSD, we work with health economic models, real world data and digital tools to better understand patient pathways, treatment outcomes and system inefficiencies. This enables evidence based decisions, more transparent use of resources and better value for patients and payers. These are areas where I see real potential to make a positive difference also in the Slovak context.

HOW DO YOU SEE THE ROLE OF BUSINESS, INCLUDING MULTINATIONAL COMPANIES, IN SHAPING HEALTHCARE AND POLICY DISCUSSIONS?

Businesses should act as constructive, transparent and evidence based partners. In healthcare, this means contributing expertise, data and a long term perspective, rather than promoting narrow interests. Open dialogue between industry, policymakers, payers and patient organisations is essential to designing solutions that are both sustainable and socially responsible. Platforms such as AmCham play a crucial role in enabling this type of cross sector dialogue.