# Global Innovation and Healthy China 2030


**Jean-Christophe Pointeau**

Over the past 20 years, R&D-Based Pharmaceutical Association Committee (RDPAC) and its members have been privileged to witness firsthand China's remarkable economic and social transformation. This transformation has been underpinned by the Chinese government's substantial investment in the health and wellbeing of its people. In the past decade alone, the Chinese government has *doubled* its investment in health. We have seen significant improvements across the board—in public health, healthcare services, medical security and access to medicine. Most recently, these efforts have been guided by the *Healthy China 2030* blueprint, which places health at the heart of policy making.

The impact of this investment, and of the government's commitment to health and wellbeing, has been staggering. At the turn of the century, less than one in three Chinese people had access to health insurance. Today, China has achieved near-universal health coverage. Life expectancy, at 77.3 years, is now very similar to that of developed nations; infant and infectious disease mortality rates have plummeted; and survival rates for malignant tumors have risen by 10% points compared to a decade ago. I am particularly proud of the role innovative drugs and new therapies have played in supporting these remarkable achievements.

Of course, as our world changes, so do the health needs of our populations. China's health system, like many others in the world, is under increasing pressure—from an expanding middle class, ageing population, shifting burden of disease, and, of course, a global pandemic.

This means that if we are to achieve the bold *Healthy China 2030* vision, we all need to step up and dig deeper. Everyone has a role to play, including RDPAC and its

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members. In fact, research estimates that innovation in the pharmaceutical industry could help reduce China's disease burden by up to 55% by 2040. Yes, you heard me correctly, 55%! I would like to walk you through how RDPAC and its members plan to make this estimate a reality.

Let me start with prevention. Prevention is a core component of the *Healthy China 2030* vision, and one that the innovative pharmaceutical industry is committed to supporting. In today's world, I cannot think of a more important innovation in disease prevention than industry's efforts to deliver COVID-19 vaccines in record time. RDPAC and its members are also committed to collaborating broadly to support other disease prevention efforts. We do this by promoting health literacy, continuing medical education, encouraging early screening and creating management solutions for chronic disease across China.

RDPAC and its members are also committed to bringing new, innovative medicines to China to help patients live longer and healthier lives. Over the past five years alone, international pharmaceutical companies introduced over 150 new, innovative drugs to China—many of which targeted unmet need in the oncology space.

Of course, we know that accelerating medical innovation to address unmet need will only get us so far. We must be able to get our innovative medicines and vaccines to patients that need them.

That is why RDPAC strongly supports China's recent efforts to expand access to healthcare, including to innovative medicines and vaccines. Let me give you three examples of government reforms that have really started to make a difference in this area.

- First, NMPA[1] has worked hard to accelerate the drug review and approval process and align its regulatory framework with international standards. Because of these reforms, for example, Chinese breast cancer patients were able to access Pfizer's first-in-class therapy, Ibrance, two years earlier than originally planned.
- Second, the Chinese government is supporting efforts to improve affordability and reduce out-of-pocket costs for patients. Last year, for example, the government announced the introduction of a more dynamic NRDL[2] listing system and confirmed its intention to support the development and uptake of commercial health insurance.
- Third, the Chinese government has made several important commitments to strengthen the IP system, including by introducing patent term adjustments and a patent linkage system.

But there is still more to do. Developing innovative medicines and vaccines is a complex, multi-year and resource-intensive process. It can take 10-plus years and

[1] National Medical Products Administration (NMPA) is responsible for the registration of drugs, cosmetics, medical devices and the implementation of supervision and management.

[2] The National Reimbursement Drug List (NRDL) is a list of drugs that are authorized for reimbursement by a central government agency. The government will only reimburse some costs if the drug is not that expensive. If a drug is produced at an expensive price, it will most likely not be included on the reimbursement list.

billions of dollars to take an idea from bench to bedside, with many failures along the way.

For biopharmaceutical companies to deepen their investment in innovation in China, they need to know that their investment will be rewarded. That is why an environment that values and incentivizes innovation is key to supporting access to medicines and medical products, year after year. Integral elements of this ecosystem include:

- A transparent and predictable pricing and reimbursement system that supports access and innovation
- A regulatory system that supports global simultaneous development
- A strong and stable intellectual property system that is aligned with international best practice.

We look forward to continuing to collaborate with the government to support these and other health reform efforts. I am confident that, by working together, we can help China realize the *Healthy China 2030* vision.