

NAV Interview with Patrick Horber

The members of the Novartis Employees Association as well as our colleagues are always thrilled about the interviews we have been able to conduct with Novartis' leaders.

Thank you for your availability and for sharing your insights and experiences with us.

Most readers will already be familiar with your impressive biography. In your role as President of the International Unit at Novartis, you are contributing more than twenty years of experience in the biopharma sector and extensive knowledge in driving commercial performance on a global scale. As an experienced Swiss doctor, you speak five languages and have been President of the International Unit since the end of 2023.

On behalf of the NAV, I wish to thank you for your time and the opportunity to conduct this interview. It's something that we appreciate greatly.

DAVIDE LAUDITI
Co-President, Novartis Employees Association

TO THE INTERVIEW



Patrick Horber
President, International

What inspired you to study medicine?

PATRICK HORBER: I grew up in Peru. My mother volunteered at the local hospital, and on my way home from school, I often stopped by to pick her up. I was fascinated by medicine and its huge impact on people. Paired with my interest in science and the desire to work in a field that brings value to society, I knew very early on that I wanted to enter the world of medicine.

Does this inspiration still accompany you in your work today, and if so, in what way and why?

Absolutely! Improving and extending the lives of people remains at the core of my motivation and keeps me going on those days when it is not that easy to get up early in the morning. Although I am further away from the individual patient in my current role compared to when I worked at the hospital, I find great purpose in the scale and impact of our work.



What formative experiences and greatest challenges have you faced in your career at AbbVie and Roche, and how have they prepared you for your current position as President of our International Unit?

Each career step added unique skills and lessons to the toolbox that make up the leader I am today. Entering the industry as a sales representative provided me with the opportunity to truly understand what matters in the field. People couldn't believe why I gave up a career in the hospital to become a sales rep, but I always knew that this experience would be crucial. Over time, my set of experiences grew across different markets, regions and cultures – allowing me to shape and find my leadership style, which is very much focused on people.

The biggest challenge that followed me all the way through my career and across companies is the public perception of our industry. We provide such a huge benefit to society, but often, a different narrative prevails. I am strongly committed to keep working with passion and energy to move the needle, and to build greater trust with society.

What motivated you to switch to Novartis?

Novartis is an impressive company, particularly known across the industry for its strong innovative power and its commitment to access. These points played an important role in my decision. I am deeply convinced of our products and our pipeline, and I see it as a privilege to make groundbreaking therapies like radioligand therapies accessible to patients worldwide.

The strategic focus towards a pure-play innovative medicines company was also decisive for me. I am convinced that this is the right path – and the results of our first year as a focused company underline this.

Joining Novartis also felt a bit like a “homecoming.” Not just geographically! My father worked at Ciba-Geigy and at Novartis until 2001 – I remember following his work with interest.

What challenges did you face when joining Novartis, and what particularly positive aspects of our company have surprised you?

When I joined Novartis at the end of 2023, the company was going through a lot of change. We moved to a new way of working across Strategy & Growth, Research & Development and Commercial, with two separate units for the US and International. And we also moved away from having a global marketing and global value & access team, to dedicated teams for the US and International – recognizing the unique needs and priorities we have in each. This was a big shift for Novartis, especially for our commercial organizations, and changes of this magnitude come with many challenges. Despite this, from day one, I felt welcomed and inspired. I have only ever perceived one direction from our people – and that is forward, for patients. The talent, dedication and passion of our employees here at Novartis are really exceptional and continue to inspire me every day!

What do you think are the biggest challenges Novartis will have to face in the coming years?

Already this year we will encounter a crucial challenge: One of our best-selling products, is expected to lose patent protection in the US around mid-year. This gap must be filled – investors and shareholders will continue to have high expectations. We are very confident we can, with our current inmarket products and upcoming launches. This is also reflected in our 2025 guidance, with expected net sales growth of mid to high single digit.

All the more important is that we tap the full potential of our growth drivers and master new launches.

What potential problems could arise if a long-term solution with the EU is not reached? How would this impact Novartis and its operations?

Stable relations with the EU, Switzerland's most important trading partner, are central to our industry and the Swiss economy. In this regard, we also welcome the Federal Council's planned further development of bilateral agreements. If a long-term solution with the EU is not reached, it would lead to a slow erosion of bilateral agreements. The consequences would be serious for our industry, as we rely on regulated relations with the EU – in hiring skilled talent, in export to the EU, and in research.

We should not forget that it is only due to an interim solution that Switzerland recently regained access to "Horizon Europe," a key funding program for research and innovation, after three years of exclusion.

What are typical differences in pharmaceutical market activities between the USA and Europe?

What stands out for me is the different approach in rewarding innovation, and the appetite to be at the forefront of innovation. The EU has fallen behind other regions in the approval and launch of new medicines. Over the past decade one in five new medicines approved in the US were not filed for regulatory approval in EU. Navigating the EU member state policies is discouragingly slow and complicated. Plus, we are facing the EU Pharma Legislation, which is planning to reduce intellectual property (IP) rights. This is neither in favor of patients nor in favor of Europe's own industrial competitiveness.

In Switzerland, we face similar challenges. Only 47% of innovative medicines approved in the EU (as of January 2025) are fully available and reimbursed in Switzerland. Another 27% face limitations and 27% are not at all available.

The US is much more open to rewarding innovation. I am not saying that we need a second US healthcare system in Europe – its challenges are widely known. What I am saying is that we need better conditions for innovation in Europe: efficient regulations, IP protection, simplified and harmonized policies that foster competitiveness, attracting global talent, and driving innovation.

What technological and scientific developments do you see as particularly important for the future of Novartis?

AI of course is top of mind and Novartis is investing. I'm excited about the potential we have to empower our field force around the world, and we are currently rolling out a program across International called ICE (International Commercialization Excellence) that includes AI-enabled technology. Our field force receive an AI-enhanced call plan to help them have more meaningful interactions with healthcare professionals. Of course, AI also has huge potential in drug discovery and development – reducing the time it takes to deliver transfor-

mative medicines to patients. It's really exciting to see the many collaborations we have across the company with AI-advanced players!

You attended the “World Economic Forum Annual Meeting 2025” in Davos. Could you share your impressions and experiences from this event?

It continues to be a valuable platform to connect with top political and business leaders. People often refer to it as “50 business trips in one” – and that's also how I see it. This year, I had the opportunity to connect with senior stakeholders from our top markets, including Prime Ministers, Ministers of Health, Industry, Trade and many others. A prominent theme has been the acceleration of innovation and the role of life sciences for tomorrow's competitiveness, especially in Europe. I was glad to see signs of realization coming from Europe, and left Davos more optimistic than I entered.

What was the bravest move you made in your career, and how did it change your life?

Moving out of the hospital as a practitioner and into the private sector. As mentioned, my first role in the industry was in the field, and basically all my friends and family called me crazy. I remember it was my dad who had my back and encouraged me to do what feels right, and where I see my purpose.

What values are most important to you in your work and life, and why?

Honesty, integrity, and discipline. Honesty is the foundation for everything – we need to be able to trust each other and discuss topics transparently.

The Novartis Employees Association represents the interests of the employees. In your opinion, how could the dialogue between the management and the employees be improved, and what contribution could the association make to this?

First of all, I would like to thank the NAV and its delegates in the Internal Employee Representation. The constructive work that you do for our people is extremely valuable.

Personally, I think it all comes down to open communication. In the search for common ground, we have to truly listen to each other and always believe in each other's best intent. The NAV contributes significantly by providing regular platforms for exchange.

Which personality has impressed you the most in life?

Nelson Mandela. I am deeply inspired by how he has put the greater good first, united people and practiced true, selfless leadership.

Are you a thinker or a feeler?

A bit of both – depending on the situation. I am extroverted, I love to be with people and to connect. I spend a lot of my time traveling to our international markets to meet our teams and people in person, it's the best way to not only understand the business dynamics but also get a feeling for our teams, their passion and what drives them. During these country visits, I get to leverage both sides of me.

What question have you never been asked, but would like to answer here?

Question: Rivella or Ovomaltine?

Answer: Ovomaltine! Here I actually lack discipline myself. (He winks.)

This interview was conducted on March 26, 2025.