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China Development Forum 2026

China in its 15th Five-Year Plan Period: Advancing High-Quality Development and Creating New Opportunities Together

Symposium on Healthy China 2030 and Big Health Industry Development

(Panel Discussion I)

The China Development Forum 2026, hosted by the Development Research Centre of the State Council and organized by the China Development Research Foundation, was held on March 22-23, 2026 at the Diaoyutai State Guesthouse in Beijing. On the afternoon of March 22, the Symposium on Healthy China 2030 and Big Health Industry Development was convened. The panelists for Panel Discussion I were Michael Kremer, Professor at the University of Chicago and 2019 Nobel Laureate in Economics; Vasant Narasimhan, CEO of Novartis; Marc Casper, Chairman and CEO of Thermo Fisher Scientific; David A. Ricks, Chair and CEO of Eli Lilly and Company; Michael Nelson, President and CEO of Amway; and Robert Ford, Chairman and CEO of Abbott Laboratories. The session was chaired by ZHUO Xian, Director-General of the Department of Social and Cultural Development Research at the Development Research Centre of the State Council.

Centered on the theme of the symposium, **Michael Kremer** concentrated on preventive health and public health policy, sharing two core research methodologies and their integration: randomized controlled trials (RCT) and market shaping.

First, RCT is an experimental method widely used in medical research, but it is increasingly becoming an important tool for evaluating policy effectiveness. By establishing a control group comparable to the experimental group, RCTs minimize the influence of other confounding factors, allowing for a scientific assessment of policy outcomes. This method has been extensively applied in fields such as education, agriculture, and water treatment. In recent years, its use in economics and related areas has been steadily growing. RCTs can provide evidence for the effectiveness of solutions and can guide policy formulation through phased implementation across different locations. In the future, RCTs could also be applied to diverse scenarios such as extreme weather alerts, mental illness prevention, and health management.

Second, increasing market commitments can stimulate R&D innovation. This approach successfully facilitated the development of pneumococcal vaccines, saving countless lives. In the future, it can be applied to the R&D of influenza vaccines and novel drug delivery methods, and to the identification of new indications for generic drugs. Its advantage lies in paying only after the technology has been proven effective, balancing corporate returns, fiscal oversight, and public needs to achieve a win-win outcome for all parties. Kremer emphasized that combining the precise evaluation of RCTs with the incentive mechanisms of market shaping can encourage pharmaceutical innovation and ultimately enable proactive health.

Vasant Narasimhan spoke highly of China's continued efforts to promote high-standard opening-up, build an innovation-friendly ecosystem, and create a stable investment environment. Novartis is currently maintaining strong growth while steadily expanding its market presence in China. He emphasized two core points.

First, developing the healthcare industry is of great significance. It is

essential not only for saving lives and improving people's quality of life, but also serves as an important engine for economic growth. Emerging technologies like artificial intelligence are accelerating drug discovery and reshaping the healthcare ecosystem. By leveraging China's strength in digital innovation and AI, the deeper integration of life sciences with digital technology can drive new breakthroughs in healthcare and create fresh momentum for economic growth.

Second, sustaining an innovative ecosystem requires a clear, scientific, and predictable regulatory framework. This will help continuously strengthen intellectual property and regulatory data protection, improve the end-to-end manufacturing and supply chains, and enhance the healthcare system's capacity to apply new therapies clinically.

Marc Casper shared Thermo Fisher Scientific's achievements from years of deep engagement in China, the vast development opportunities in China's healthcare sector, and his vision for deepening international medical research collaboration. He also expressed the company's firm commitment to long-term presence and win-win cooperation in China. He noted that the future development of China's healthcare industry could focus on two key areas: oncology diagnosis and treatment, and addressing population aging. In oncology, technologies such as molecular analysis, proteomics, and AI-driven analytics are accelerating the shift toward precision medicine. China has already secured an important position in the global drug development pipeline. Regarding aging, the accelerating aging process poses higher demands for long-term disease management and medical innovation. China is actively conducting in-depth research into the mechanisms of aging-related diseases and advancing the development of corresponding therapies. He noted that challenges in the scientific field are global in nature, requiring enhanced cross-border

collaboration in innovation and the maintenance of an interconnected global ecosystem for scientific innovation.

David A. Ricks shared his insights on the public health development landscape and chronic disease prevention and control, offering several recommendations. He noted that in recent years, China's healthcare development has gradually shifted its focus from expanding scale to improving quality. Significant progress has been made in areas such as life expectancy and the prevention and control of major infectious diseases. At the same time, however, chronic diseases have emerged as a major challenge in China's public health landscape, with obesity as a key contributing factor.

Ricks proposed three recommendations.

First, develop medium- and long-term action plans for weight management, promote cross-departmental coordination, and explore corresponding mechanisms for resource allocation.

Second, refine the definition and management of obesity-related medical interventions by referencing international standards for safe and effective obesity medications, enhancing the standardization of clinical diagnosis and treatment, and clearly distinguishing medical interventions from non-medical uses.

Third, explore multi-tiered payment and coverage mechanisms, scientifically assess intervention outcomes through methods such as Health Technology Assessment (HTA), and simultaneously promote improvements in relevant medical education and service systems.

Michael Nelson stated that the national strategy of "Healthy China" is highly aligned with market trends and corporate missions. To fulfill the Healthy China 2030 vision, he emphasized two key approaches.

First, it is essential to continue driving technological innovation and developing science-based health products and solutions that meet the

evolving needs of the public. For example, artificial intelligence can be adopted to integrate traditional Chinese medicine with modern biomedical approaches.

Second, it is important to enhance public health awareness and promote healthier lifestyles, shifting the focus of healthcare from treatment to prevention. At the same time, efforts should be made to address the increasingly diverse and holistic health needs of the public.

Robert Ford noted that as China's average life expectancy reaches 80 years, the importance of high-quality medical technologies has become increasingly prominent. To promote innovation in the healthcare sector, he believes that a sustainable innovation ecosystem should be established. This ecosystem should be guided by clinical needs in hospitals, driven by the R&D and commercialization efforts of healthcare companies, and supported by payment systems such as medical insurance. Ford pointed out that China has significantly improved the affordability of basic medical services through multiple rounds of medical service pricing reforms. However, innovative products require a more differentiated policy framework, including flexible pricing periods, accelerated market entry processes for innovative products, and diagnosis-related group (DRG) payment standards better suited to breakthrough technologies.

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— Background Information —

The China Development Forum (CDF) is hosted by the Development Research Centre of the State Council and organized by the China Development Research Foundation. Since its inception in 2000, the Forum has been dedicated to the mission of "engaging with the world for common prosperity." It has served as an important platform for high-level, professional dialogue among China's senior government officials, global business leaders, representatives from international organizations, as well as scholars from both China and around the world.

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