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Neurim Pharmaceuticals is a research-driven pharmaceutical company dedicated to advancing science in central nervous system disorders, with a strong emphasis on sleep-related conditions. Carolin Hillebrand, Country Manager of Switzerland and Regional Alliance Lead for the German market, shares the company's recent achievements including the development, regulatory approval, and commercialisation of a paediatric formulation of its flagship insomnia therapy, specifically designed for children with neurodevelopmental conditions.

What have been some of Neurim's key milestones and achievements since your last interview with PharmaBoardroom?

It has been quite a journey. At the core of our business remains our unwavering focus on science, patients, and addressing genuine medical needs. That is deeply embedded in our corporate DNA. Our mission has always been to conduct comprehensive research in the field of central nervous system (CNS) disorders and to develop innovative therapeutic solutions based on scientific understanding of the underlying pathophysiology and patient needs.

A major milestone has been the clinical development, registration and commercialisation of a child-appropriate version of our lead insomnia treatment. It was brought to market specifically for children with neurodevelopmental conditions.

What makes this particularly significant is that it is one of the very few treatments to receive Paediatric Use Marketing Authorisation (PUMA) status in Europe. This is undoubtedly one of the most defining developments. The decision to pursue this paediatric product development plan was very much accelerated by the high unmet medical need, as expressed by both healthcare professionals and patient communities.

Can you give us an overview of your current portfolio and pipeline?

Our current portfolio includes a range of melatonin-based medicines tailored to different patient populations. Among them is a prolonged-release formulation developed specifically for children and adolescents with neurodevelopmental conditions such as autism spectrum disorder, certain genetic syndromes, and more recently, attention deficit -related disorders. This formulation addresses sleep disturbances that are often prevalent in these groups.

As for our pipeline, it remains firmly rooted in central nervous system research, with a particular emphasis on sleep-related conditions and associated neurological disorders. Our overarching goal is to deliver meaningful, science-driven innovative medicines that improve patients' quality of life.

What responsibilities does your current position as Regional Alliance Lead entail?

At Neurim, we believe in the power of partnerships. They are a core component of our business model. As Country Manager for Switzerland, I have the privilege of working alongside an experienced and dynamic local team, which enabled me to take on further responsibilities.

In addition to managing the Swiss market, I now also serve as the Regional Alliance Lead for Germany. Our local partner, InfectoPharm, is a company with a rich heritage in paediatric medicine and an in-depth understanding of the local pharmaceutical landscape. My key responsibility in this role is to ensure alignment of corporate and strategic goals across companies and markets, in order to drive sustainable growth.

Neurim's PUMA product recently received a positive opinion for two line extensions from the Committee for Medicinal Products for Human Use in July 2024 and early 2025. How does this development align with your strategic approach in Switzerland and Germany?

The European Commission has since granted approval for two-line extensions of our lead paediatric product. This was a major milestone for paediatric patients and their families and a significant achievement, not just for us but also for our distribution partners – including in Germany and throughout Europe. It is a strong signal encouraging further research in the paediatric field which comes with its own set of specific requirements and complexities.

In Germany for example, together with InfectoPharm, we continuously expand and facilitate fair access for patients in need for our medicines. Achieving this requires meticulous stakeholder engagement, broad educational outreach, and a commitment to identifying and addressing access gaps. With the approval of the recent line extensions, we were pleased to successfully broaden access for patients to the product also in Germany – something we are genuinely proud of.

In today's healthcare environment, developing new medicines is a major undertaking, often fraught with risk. But timely access is an equally pressing challenge, and that is where a great deal of our effort lies today.

What is your view on the current insomnia landscape, particularly in Switzerland and Germany?

Insomnia is remarkably prevalent. Statistics show that at least one in three elderly individuals are affected. While some cases are transient; many evolve into chronic conditions. This is even more so with children with neurodevelopmental conditions where sleep difficulties prevail in at least 50 percent of them. Therefore, the unmet medical need is significant.

In some instances, we understand the underlying pathophysiology, but in others it is less specific – presenting both challenges and opportunities. If left untreated, insomnia can severely impact quality of life and overall well-being of patients. It is not just a night-time issue; the effects extend into the daytime functioning, impairing concentration, mood, and development. Particularly in children, it can impact their full developmental potential.

Sleep disorders are real, and they deserve attention – not just from a clinical standpoint, but also from a public health and ethical perspective. Luckily**,** I do believe awareness has increased. Thanks to education efforts and open discussions at congresses, hospitals, and community meetings, there is growing recognition of insomnia as a condition that requires treatment and if left untreated comes at high costs that impacts the public budget.

In Switzerland, in particular, there has been a noticeable shift in how insomnia is addressed – both in adult and paediatric populations. Physicians are screening more frequently, and more patients are seeking help – likely driven by both rising awareness and greater treatment availability.

In terms of patient empowerment – how are people taking ownership of their condition and seeking out solutions?

In my view, the burden of insomnia becomes intolerable over time. Patients begin withdrawing from social life, and that is compounded by fatigue, concentration difficulties, mood disorders, and even depression. In addition to psychological challenges, physical health issues may occur.

Eventually, they do seek medical help. And as awareness and treatment options have grown, physicians are becoming better equipped to screen for sleep disorders and offer tailored treatment solutions. This is especially evident in paediatrics, but increasingly we are seeing it in adults as well.

You mentioned that partnerships are key to Neurim's approach. How do you leverage Switzerland's ecosystem, particularly in academia and industry?

Switzerland is actually a pioneer in the field of early intervention for children with autism spectrum disorders. It is one of the few countries with highly structured and specialised early intervention centres, and these institutions not only provide care but also conduct ongoing research. We actively collaborate with these centres, seeking advice and learning from their expertise. This kind of partnership is incredibly valuable for us.

With the Swiss affiliate being established in 2010, how has the company's local footprint in the country grown?

We have certainly grown over the years. Today, we are active in the Swiss market with two well-established treatments that make a meaningful difference to patients' quality of life. Switzerland continues to play a pivotal role for Neurim globally, not only as a key market, but also as the location of one of our main production sites for selected regions. Naturally, as our portfolio has expanded and our international footprint has grown, we have also established additional production and research collaborations outside Switzerland.

Given the region’s competitive industry landscape with many large pharma companies nearby, how do you attract talent?

Being located in this area means we benefit from a strong talent pool. Our value proposition centres on our purpose – improving patients quality of life. That resonates with many professionals.

We are also a privately owned company, so our culture differs from large public corporations. We offer short communication lines, autonomy, and opportunities for employees to grow by taking on diverse responsibilities. This appeals to those who value agility and an entrepreneurial spirit.

Working at Neurim never feels routine. Even after 15 years, I continuously tackle new goals and responsibilities. It keeps my job exciting and allows for continuous personal and professional growth.

Bringing products to market in Switzerland involves navigating strong but sometimes slow systems. What was your experience with access and reimbursement?

While Swissmedic’s approval process has been smooth and aligned with expectations, timely reimbursement was still a challenge.

We had to engage extensively with key opinion leaders and other stakeholders to get fair access – especially for paediatric patients. While Article 71 and other mechanisms exist, we believe that truly equitable access should not depend on such workarounds. Children are a particularly vulnerable group and deserve timely access to effective treatments.

Germany’s system is quite different. While there are lessons to learn, I believe Switzerland should focus on improving its own system from within.

Every market has its own payor structure and stakeholder landscape, and we need to work with the specificities of our ecosystem. That said, Switzerland could still be more responsive, flexible and sensitive, particularly when timely and fair access is needed for vulnerable patient populations.

Looking ahead, what are your current priorities for the future of Neurim Switzerland?

At the corporate level, Neurim has significantly strengthened its business development and commercial capabilities. We are actively exploring opportunities for innovation, growth, and partnerships – both globally and locally. Therefore, we continue to scan the market for in licensing opportunities and potential collaborations that align with our core mission and complement our portfolio.

I would like to close with one of Neurim’s core messages: we are committed to improving patients’ lives through constant innovation. That is what drives us.

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