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At Leo Pharma it's not just about skin conditions. It's about the people living with them. The recently appointed senior director for Latin America discusses the plans of the company for the region and how, in collaboration with dermatologists, it aims at reaching out to an increasing number of patients.

You were appointed senior area director for Latin America in August 2014 and since then have been leading the 18 countries within the region. What mission did the headquarters entrust you with?

Many things have changed at Leo Pharma in the last 15 years: we have moved from being a company mainly focused on the European and Canadian markets to a team that is reaching out to the rest of the world. Our mission is to help patients suffering from skin diseases achieving a healthy skin, so what better way than expanding our worldwide presence? Three years ago we consolidated the dermatology division and divided the world in five regions according to their market characteristics. We opened an affiliate in the US some years ago, so the market became a region by itself; Canada and the larger countries within the European Union became another, as they have similar reimbursement and marketing systems; the third region is the Asian market; the

fourth we named LAMEA – Latin America, Middle East and Africa – because, despite the differences, the business dynamics are very similar; finally, the fifth and last subdivision is comprised of smaller European markets, such as certain eastern European and Scandinavian countries.

With this regionalization and because of the different social and economic circumstances, it became evident that the needs of the patients varied according to each specific region. Our response has been to develop diverse portfolios for each area. My personal mission in Leo Pharma is to double the number of patients we can help, in Latin America, including Mexico, within a three year period timeframe. This will automatically increase the number of sales and the profit as well.

How would you assess the awareness for specialty dermatology treatments and products here in Mexico?

I think there is an increasing awareness for skin care. Because of the nature of skin diseases – most of them being visible – patients have a huge social challenge to overcome. When I visit pharmacies in Mexico I see, apart from prescription skin care products, a lot of so-called ‘cosmoceuticals’, cosmetic products with or without biologically active ingredients. That indicates that there is a large need in Mexican patients to take care of their skin.

What marketing strategy have you implemented so far in the Mexican market and how are you working with dermatologists?

We are currently focusing mostly on the private market; nevertheless, we are also trying to help people in the public sector. Unfortunately most governments do not highly prioritise dermatology because most skin conditions do not represent a threat to the life of the patient. This is understandable, due to budget restraints, but in real life, the impact of skin diseases on patients, their family and society is very substantial. Many patients suffer from depression and other psychological factors and have a huge impact on their life and society. We are slowly being able to reach more patients because we are turning towards more decentralized institutions. Our access to the Mexican social security institutions IMSS and ISSSTE so far is very limited, mainly because of budget restraints and the difficulties to get skin diseases on the agenda.

We have an excellent collaborative relationship with dermatologists in Mexico. Most of them are fully aware of our portfolio and are all very well-trained about the diseases and use of the products. Given the trend in Mexico to have physicians at the point-of-sale, we recently funded selected pharmacies to have a dermatologist to attend patients suffering from skin diseases. While such an initiative can help diagnose conditions, we also need to be very careful, as many patients don’t know they may suffer from a chronic, life long condition and it can be a life-changing experience to

become aware of this. Some of the diseases, such as psoriasis, don’t have a cure and need special treatment for the rest of life.

Later this year we will start a patient engagement program for psoriasis patients in Mexico called QualityCare™. The program has already been launched in many other countries around the globe and it is based on an algorithm with the input of 4,300 patients about their greatest concerns with regard to the condition, both physically and psychologically. We want people to share their experiences so we can help develop better products and solutions, and engage our patients in a more efficient way.

Globally Leo Pharma focuses on dermatology and thrombosis. How did you adapt your product portfolio to Mexico and Latin America?

In the past we used to offer the same dermatology products everywhere; however, three years ago we started thinking about the specific needs of the patients within the regions, thus adapted the portfolio strategy to the different markets. For example, we introduced larger pack sizes for the treatment of skin infections, a very common condition in Latin America, but at a reduced price per treatment.

Our thrombosis business in Mexico – as well as in other Latin American countries – is still at its infancy. We have an excellent product to treat deep vein thrombosis, especially in cancer and fragile patients. It is a matter of reformulating and fitting our models to the specific needs for each country. Once we manage to enter the public sector in Mexico, it may be considered as a future priority to help more patients.

Can you provide us your take on the Mexican market compared to the Brazilian one?

Both markets are extremely similar. Four years ago, when we developed Leo’s focus markets, everyone was moving to Brazil because of the opportunities offered by the country; at that time it was logical for us to be there, while Mexico still seemed a bit nebulous. Now we are happy to have strengthened our organization in Mexico and Latin America as well and are planning to launch new solutions, such as smaller pack sizes for our products, so more people are able to afford them.

What stands high on the company’s agenda for the coming five years in Mexico and Latin America?

We still have a lot of work to do. We are focusing on making sure that patients are getting good quality medical care; it is not only about the products and how they use them, it’s much more than that. I would like to move to a more patient-centered view by looking at local needs: we should find

localized models to reach each Leo Pharma region because one size does not fit it all. We will move away from offering just a limited scope of products to have a much more varied portfolio and care concept. We want to set a strong footprint in the market and in the region.

What keeps you motivated at Leo Pharma after almost fifteen years?

It is great to work for a company that has such a solid platform and is so dedicated to moving towards a patient-focused orientation. This has everything to do with our organisation as foundation, our principles and philosophies; we are not here to generate money for shareholders, we have the freedom to invest everything we earn to help as many people as possible and pushing and innovating in the dermatological industry.

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