Interview: Thierry Guillot – President, Chugai Pharma France



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Thierry Guillot, president of Chugai Pharma France, talks about the challenge of

transitioning from a small organization, which revolved around one main product into a larger entity capable of delivering multiple products and solutions; he also reveals how since 2008, Chugai and Roche have worked together on marketing and business development in every concerned subsidiary including France.

Through our platform, we introduce the leaders of the pharma industry and their partners to our readers around the world. With that in mind, would you please introduce yourself and Chugai´s French affiliate to our readers?

I am a medical oncologist by training and I used to work at the Gustave Roussy Institute (IGR). I joined Lederle in the 1990s and was involved in clinical development and medical affairs activities concerning different oncology drugs for the treatment of colorectal cancer, breast cancer as well as patients with onco-hematology diseases. Following the merger between Lederle and Wyeth, I moved to the European R&D department where I was in charge of clinical research as Associate Director of the Immunology Department.

I have been working for Chugai since 1998 which coincided with the establishment of the Chugai French affiliate, CHUGAI PHARMA FRANCE. We first obtained the *“Pharmaceutical exploitant status’’*

in 2002, in order to solely promote lenograstim, a granulocyte colony stimulating factor, which helps cancer patients reduce the duration of chemotherapy induced neutropenia. The Alliance with Roche took place in 2002. Ever since, Chugai has kept its autonomy regarding research development and for its affiliates.

Can you tell us about some of Chugai´s other products that have benefited from your close collaboration with Roche?

Chugai, in collaboration with Roche (copromotion), has introduced tocilizumab, a biotechnology product (IL-6 receptor antibody drug) mainly used in rheumatoid arthritis and which stems from Chugai´s R&D efforts in Japan. Roche was granted the authorization to commercialize the product in Europe. Since 2008, Chugai and Roche have worked together on marketing and business development in every concerned subsidiary including France, Germany and the United Kingdom.

Overall, one of the main benefits of this Alliance for Roche is access to Chugai's R&D capacity and innovative products. From a business perspective, the strong cooperation between both companies has catalyzed synergies. In Japan for instance, Chugai commercializes both products derived from its own research and products developed by Roche.

Until 2008, I was mainly working in the medical segment of the company. Things changed when my predecessor put me in charge of building the business structure designed for the co-promotion of tocilizumab with Roche. Since my appointment as President in 2012, my mandate has mainly been geared towards management. I also remain the director of the scientific and regulatory department.

What is the strategic importance of the French affiliate when it comes to Chugai´s European ambitions?

Starting from 2009, the French affiliate has overseen the commercialization of lenograstim in Belgium and Luxembourg. Chugai Pharma Europe is composed of three affiliates (France, UK and Germany), France being the largest in terms of revenues. All three affiliates are working in collaboration with Roche thanks to the Alliance formed in 2002 by the respective chairmen of Roche and Chugai, Franz Humer and Osamu Nagayama.

In 2015 we finalized the reorganization of our European entity Chugai Pharma Europe, which now comprises three main divisions: the development division including clinical development and regulatory, the medical affairs division including also pharmacovigilance, and the commercial division. We want to incorporate innovative products derived from Chugai's research.

Moreover, in 2013 and 2014, Chugai Pharma Europe signed in-license agreements with other partners in order to develop our business in onco-hematology and in cancer supportive care in Europe. The French affiliate will strongly contribute to it.

Is it fair to say that France plays a key role in expanding business opportunities for the Group globally?

Chugai Pharma Europe is growing as it becomes more and more necessary for the Chugai Group to develop its overseas activities and therefore to count on a strong regional organization to conduct business in Europe. 2015 was a cornerstone year as the European structure of Chugai integrated clinical development activities and set up three divisions: Development, Medical and Commercial. The contribution of Chugai Pharma France will of course continue to be strong as we should have the pleasure to promote several new innovative drugs (Best In Class, First In Class) within the coming three or four years.

I know that Chugai attaches a lot of importance to conducting clinical trials for investigational drugs. What roles does Europe play in this regard?

In Europe, at the medical level, Chugai is very involved with medical affairs. We have a clinical development center in London. Our clinical research activity originated in Japan, is now growing in the old continent. One of the main benefits of our alliance with Roche is to capitalize on their clinical development and testing capacity for products that stem from our own research. Without Roche’s multicenter clinical research efforts, we would have never been able to introduce outside of Japan tocilizumab as rapidly as it has been done, for the benefit of patients. It is however very important for us to develop our own clinical research capacity for products that we discover.

France is notorious for its complicated regulatory environment and the difficulty of its pricing and reimbursement processes. What has been your experience in dealing with market access issues?

It is true that in comparison to our European counterparts, market access takes much longer in France. Within this context, Chugai French affiliate has created new positions dedicated to market access. Given our relatively small size, we also hire specialized consultants who deliver their expertise and complementary studies to help us overcome regulatory requirements. That being said, our main challenge today is to make the transition from a small organization – which revolved around one main product – into a larger entity capable of delivering four or five turnkey products and solutions. We are also looking to continue developing internal competencies and further coordinate with our global affiliates to catalyze synergies. These competencies include

business/market intelligence, medical planning, and compliance.

Mr Guillot, you have extensive experience working in the pharmaceutical industry, dating back to 1990. What advice would you give to young people today that are considering entering the pharmaceutical industry?

The pharmaceutical industry is very challenging and changing. Young people aspiring to build a career in the pharmaceutical industry must consider their first choice and be fully committed to it. They must envision a mission at the service of patients and health professionals. They must also be driven by innovation and science. As a manager, it is important to listen to others' issues and predicaments. A manager in a company like Chugai must surround him- or herself with experts who bring different skills and competencies on the table. No one can run a pharmaceutical company on their own. Today Chugai employs 85 people in France. Our medium size team must therefore carry various missions at once. We do not have the manpower to assign one unit to a specific mission. This is the exciting and challenging part of working in a medium-sized organization like ours.

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