Interview: Eduardo Franky Pardo – General Manager, Zambon, Colombia



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Eduardo Franky Pardo, General Manager of Zambon Colombia, reveals exciting plans on launching the new promising medicine in the recently entered central nervous system therapeutic area, while continuously building their well- reputable presence in Colombia through their philosophy of making quality accessible to everyone.

Could you introduce yourself to our executive readership?

My pharmaceutical working history started back in 1990, with my first job at 3M in the healthcare division. My career pathway led to me to continuing my professional career in the pharmaceutical industry, as I moved to Sterling Winthrop which was later acquired by SmithKline Beecham- today known as GlaxoSmithKline. Later on I decided to join Roche in the OTC sector as a head of consumer healthcare which was an incredible experience, to manage consumer brands with strong investment in DTC. After this experience and a brief experience in the US as New Product Manager in Royal Caribbean, I joined Pfizer for the next six years, finding there my first truly Rx experience. I received the President Pfizer Award as a recognition to my performance. Ultimately, Zambon appeared on my horizon and caught my interest and resulted in a decade long collaboration, which I hope to extend to many more years.

Being the expert in pharmaceutical industry working for Zambon for a decade, what is your assessment on the pharmaceutical industry and how do you see it evolving in the

future?

Colombia is a very dynamic market as large players with global presence have been very active in the Colombian market. It has become a very attractive and appealing market for companies of all sizes due to availability of new technologies and molecules that have been set at a high level in comparison to the rest of the region. From a personal standpoint, I believe the healthcare system in Colombia is particularly advantageous. Even though the system showcases its faults and flaws, the fact is that we have one of the best coverages in Latin America and it should set an example for countries worldwide. We have skilled doctors who provide proper care and treatment to Colombians, which consequently continues to drive the growth of medical tourism in different fields. One interesting fact speaking in favor of that, is that Colsanitas, private healthcare insurance in Colombia counts ten percent of people who live abroad- for them it is economical and uncostly compared to other countries to simply sit on the plane and come to Colombia for the treatment.

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What have been some your most recent achievements in Zambon?

We are current market leaders in different segments, amongst others mucolitics with Fluimucil, while occupying second place in UTIs market, that is moving very fast towards taking over the leadership. Nevertheless, for the past five years we have been achieving double digit growth with Monuril, our product that is particularly well known in Europe along with Espidifen that was launched six years ago. One of the most recent achievements was entering the pain related market, highly competitive market with difficulties to get a market share. Currently, our priority is to launch Xadago, the new molecule Safinamide indicated in Parkinson Disease.

You entered new therapeutic areas. How has it been received?

It has been a complete success which resulted in our expansion into 12 European markets, where the drug is currently available. Nevertheless, this excellent new molecule is offering patients suffering from Parkinson disease the opportunity of having a better quality of life by providing more on-time, a period when patient is active and the symptoms of the disease are gone. Parkinson is a very drastic disease that unfortunately decreases the quality of life of both patients and their caregivers.

What is the significance of the Colombian operations within the global strategy of the company?

Colombia serves as a headquarter for Latin America, a hub from where we line marketing, commercial and medical strategies and deploy those to other markets. In terms of positioning, Zambon brand has been equally represented in all countries, while also implementing the use of the same clinical information and providing medical society with updated vital information. Additionally, Zambon provides extensive training to our distributors' salesforce, as our affiliates are present only in Colombia and Brazil while in other markets, our brand is present through distributors. I am particularly proud to have gathered a team of 94 people currently working in Colombia, while at the same time having long-standing partnerships with distributors throughout Latin America for more than 50 years.

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Could you walk us through your product portfolio?

Our product portfolio is well diversified between several areas: respiratory, women's health and gastro products. Our respiratory therapeutic area is accounting for the largest share in our product portfolio, accounting for 55 percent of our entire business, while women's health contributed with 25 percent, and 13 percent in cough and otic products. The remaining part accounts for smaller brands and gastro. Our main growth driver remains the respiratory category, followed by UTIs and Gastro.

In terms of revenues, how have you been performing?

Over the period of ten years, we have continuously been growing both in units and values. Specifically, we have been achieving 12 percent growth in units last year and 20 percent of growth in values. We are the 3rd best performing multinational company according to Close up both in Values and Volume.

In terms of market access, how are you contributing to advance the access to medicine in Colombia?

Our company's philosophy is represented through an innovative medicine offer at affordable price. We invest a lot of efforts into delivering products that are accessible to all Colombians. Given the fact that the minimum wage in Colombia is around 278 USD, the concept and idea of providing medicine to the entire nation has been very difficult to implement. However, Zambon has been very careful on increasing prices. Moreover, our business strategy to drive the growth is oriented towards increasing the volume rather than the price- which finally results in putting affordable medicine to the market.

When we met Gianpiero Roncoroni in Switzerland, he told us: “the new Zambon concept or theme is being an “open company”. This means we must build good relationships outside the company, work with others, and not close ourselves off from the rest of the life sciences ecosystem.” How have you been applying this concept in Colombia?

As a company involved in the advancement of the healthcare system, we are maintaining a close relationship with medical society and different stakeholders we collaborate with. Nevertheless, Zambon being a company with strong beliefs in continuous medical education, is investing heavily on educating doctors on the pathology of our portfolio and increasing awareness. Therefore, working with paediatricians, ear, nose and throat specialists and gastro society has been our priority for the past five years. As a sign of our international openness towards the concept of promoting medical education, we had the opportunity to host two international doctors: Davide Festi, a specialist on irritable bowel syndrome and Mario Cazzola, a pulmonologist, who came to share their knowledge with local and international attendees. Besides our involvement in maintaining close relationships with medical community, we have excellent partnerships with wholesalers, as they are doing a great job in putting our medicine in the spotlight of the drugstore chains in Colombia.

How would you like to position Zambon within the innovative landscape of Colombia?

Zambon strives to be an active and opened interlocutor that values and understands the position of our customers and stakeholders to offer finest products through R&D advancement at the best price. Simply, we are aiming to make quality affordable for all Colombians.

You have a working experience in both multinationals and family-owned companies. What are some of the most evident differences you experienced and what makes Zambon special?

Working in Zambon made me realise that family-owned companies are not for sale. Working for multinationals, rumours of mergers were present at all times, and the companies could be bought or sold anytime. Additionally, at Zambon, we have a different approach that is results-oriented and creative at the same time, by embracing the out of the box thinking. This is what makes me feel satisfied and gives me a rewarding feeling of stability.

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