Inês Barata Correia – General Manager Iberia, HRA Pharma, Spain



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Inês Correia, general manager of the Iberia affiliate of HRA Pharma, a

fast-growing consumer healthcare company and leader in women's health, discusses her transition to the company and challenges in the Spanish environment in the context of emergency contraception (EC). Furthermore, Correia elaborates on HRA Pharma's strong strategy in the country to shift the stigma of EC and further establish the affiliate's positioning in the market.

How has your transition to HRA Pharma been since joining the company earlier this year?

I came to HRA Pharma in January 2018 at an extraordinary time of transformation in the company and only after one year, it has been absolutely rewarding. I joined as a global commercial development director based in the HRA Pharma headquarters in Paris to develop a commercial excellence program in the top five countries. A few months later, the job in Madrid became vacant and I accepted the challenge to move again into a new role, as this had been an old dream of mine. New challenges are something that drive me.

How have your prior experiences in multinational organizations prepared you to take on the role?

Up until 2014, my professional experience was in Portugal, with roles in sales and marketing and later as head of the CHC business in Boehringer Ingelheim. In 2014, I embarked onto a new journey as commercial director for Latin America, USA, and Canada while simultaneously managing a special project to identify efficiencies in the top 30 markets of the company. After the merger with Sanofi, in 2017, I was working on the opposite side of the world in defying and very diverse countries such as Russia, Vietnam, South Korea, and Japan.

After this experience, I had the idea that I had seen it all. I experienced so many realities of people, countries, business challenges, and ways of thinking throughout my travels. This helped prepare me for future realities in my career, but of course, and thankfully, I have not seen it all and there is so much to be experienced and learned.

What would you say are the biggest challenges for HRA Pharma in Spain?

I would say for the moment the Emergency Contraception Category, especially the Brand ellaOne. Historically HRA has been focused on women's health and has become a European leader in this category. But for me, this is a very different area from the ones I worked in before. I feel I have a special mission as general manager, but also as a woman, to bring the right news to all of those who are interested. I say right news because in Spain (and also Portugal) there are many myths, misconceptions, and perceptions when it comes to emergency contraception.

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What goal for emergency contraception does HRA Pharma have in Spain?

EC is a curious category; it can be a taboo which sometimes generates strong reactions that are predominantly negative. Many people have a moral, religious, and ethical viewpoint in regard to EC – people are not indifferent. Which is fine; we live in a society where people have the right to have their opinion and express it. Our objective is to make sure that everybody has the opportunity to form an opinion based on true facts that are not mislead by beliefs or prejudices imposed by misconceptions.

It is not an easy subject to discuss. We do not want people that choose to take EC to be judged, and in the same sense, we do not want to fall to the other side and judge people because they do not accept EC. Therefore, our purpose is not to force people to any position, but rather to spread the right information. In the end, we want to break the stigma and we want women to feel empowered to take control of their contraception. We want to stop the feeling of embarrassment or shame when it comes to taking the morning after pill.

What exactly is HRA Iberia doing to overcome this taboo?

The morning after pill has been associated with irresponsible behavior, when in fact, it is a demonstration of the opposite. We want to start an open conversation about EC, and with this in mind, ellaOne is launching a digital campaign ‘Mi Día Después’ (my day after) that aims to inform about the responsible use of the pill the day after failure of the usual contraceptive method or unprotected sex.

The doubts about how it works, when to take it, or the possible side effects makes many women hesitate or feel insecure when it comes to emergency contraception. 27 percent of Spanish women are afraid of having to resort to this type of contraception for not knowing its consequences, however 55.2 percent affirm that it is their responsibility and their decision whether to take the pill. This data highlights the importance of explaining and informing how this emergency contraceptive method works. We need to raise awareness and break the stigma.

Do you have kids, would you recommend emergency contraception to them?

I have two daughters, one of them is still a teenager, and yes, when I came to HRA and had the chance to learn about the morning after pill we had that open conversation that we are trying to foster. I am not imposing anything on them, I think it is their choice, but now they know it exits, how it works, what it is, and what it is not.

What are your expectations for 2019 as your first full year as general manager?

In two simple words, very high! 2018 was a very good year for HRA Pharma Iberia, in which many initiatives for future growth have been kicked-off with extraordinary results. We have built a new team, we have achieved great results with Compeed, we launched the new ellaOne “Mi Día

Después” campaign, and we started new partnerships. 2019 is a sort of consolidation year but while keeping in mind that consolidation is not conformity. We are always looking at ways of innovating, stretching ourselves, and exceeding expectations. We are not a team of people that settles for the possible – we strive for excellence. It is the only way we can enjoy what we do.

What vision do you have for HRA Iberia in the upcoming future?

Bigger, better, and faster. We will adapt to the company’s strategy as it evolves, and I would like us to be ready for whatever challenges come. I would like us to be an affiliate that exports great examples, best practices, and talented people. I would like us to be a place where people grow to their aspirations.

On a personal note, how do you define your management style?

I do not like to think of myself as the general manager with this institutional weight because of the role I have. My style is to see the team dynamics as being equals with different roles. I see people as individuals and have a strong sense to understand personal motivations while identifying their best attributes. My job is to create the conditions and circumstances for people to be their best. I am a competitor, just because personally I like challenges, change, and innovation – I like to be surprised. I believe my leadership style is to be close to my team, be flexible to their needs, and build bridges to motivate them to succeed.

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