Pascal Joly – General Manager, Medac France



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Pascal Joly, general manager of Medac France, explains how he and his executive team have built the French affiliate from scratch, while highlighting the importance of gaining swift market access and having a diverse product portfolio.

You set up the French affiliate of German-headquartered Medac GmbH back in 2011. You built it from scratch to what it is today. How would you describe Medac's legacy in France since first penetrating the market?

Medac France is the affiliate of Medac GmbH in Germany, which boasts global revenues of EUR 500mn worldwide. I had been working in an international group specialized in generics and wanted a change in my personal and professional development. At that time Medac was only working with a distributor in France and, as we knew personally the CEO of Medac, we proposed him to establish a French affiliate. The plan was to distribute Medac's products in France but also create a specific 'niche' product development strategy tailored specifically for the French market. We asked for a significant level of autonomy as we knew that the French market had its own specific needs. We were subsequently given much freedom in setting up and developing the business.

We have chosen Lyon, as the founding executive team of Medac France was based in Lyon, but also because Lyon carries a number of strategic advantages: economically speaking, office spaces are significantly cheaper than in Paris, and Lyon offers a high quality of life with less congestion. In

addition, Lyon has always been the cradle of significant pharma companies.

What have been your main achievements and challenges over these last seven years?

Apart from the setting up of the company, the biggest challenge has been business development in general. Our priority was to create a sufficiently big enough portfolio to enable us to generate a turnover to break even financially. We have hence been looking for products, based on molecules outside of the traditional Medac portfolio, that could create quick wins on the French market. We also put on track registration procedures for products that have not been distributed before in France.

There were organizational aspects to handle as well. We have grown from 5 employees to 43 employees within three years, mainly because we took over and launched in our name the product METOJECT® developed and manufactured by Medac. It’s the number one product for our Group worldwide. To take over this product, we needed to build from scratch dedicated departments within Medac like marketing and sales, and acquire new competencies. Seven years after our creation, we were able to pass the EUR 50mn (56mn USD) mark for turnover, which is an achievement we are very proud of.

What is the footprint and the strategic significance of the French market relative to the rest of the group today?

In France, the name Medac was totally unknown before, so we had to create an image and brand awareness first. We can consider this has been quite successful, and we are increasingly considered as an established and expert actor in France, whether in the hospital and retail markets. Not only has our recognition factor increased considerably, but we are also participating in a number of significant congresses like the French Rheumatology, Dermatology and Urology Congresses, as well as Hopipharm, which is quite remarkable for a company of our size. This development conducted France to be the first market after Germany for the Medac group.

As you are active in many therapeutic areas, can you give us an overview of the local product portfolio?

Today we distinguish two business areas; the Hospital BU with products mainly tendered and the Prescription BU where we are active in Rheumatology, Dermatology and Urology.

In the Hospital BU we launch an average of 3 products per year based on Medac portfolio and local Business Development. It represents today more than 30 references. In the Prescription BU we mainly promote products from the group like Metoject or BCG. We will start a new activity in 2019 with the launch of Trecondi, a product in Onco-Hematology and we continue working on identified candidates to extend our footprint.

How would you describe the comparative ease of market access in France at the moment?

France has always had complex market access with multiple and sometimes redundant administrative steps. The willingness to reform and simplify the market access is there which is good news. There is still a lot of room to improve speed and transparency.

One key milestone for Medac France was the re-launch, in Medac's name, of METOJECT® back in April 2016. What was the rationale behind this move?

Medac is the Pharma Company that has created the market for sub-cutaneous methotrexate injection when they obtained the MA for Metoject in 2005. This was a major improvement in the treatment of Rheumatoid Arthritis. Since Medac had an affiliate in France it was logical to market Metoject by ourselves, it's our top product and is manufactured in our plant in Germany. Since the takeover, we launched with success a pre-filled Pen with 10 dosage forms and we started promotion to Dermatologists for the Psoriasis indication.

How is Medac Pharma distinguishing itself from that competition?

We are the only Pharma Company that continues to invest in clinical trials with Methotrexate, nobody else does it. This demonstrates our credibility and our expertise in that field. Our last study (Metop) has been published in the prestigious Lancet journal which has been a big honour and a huge accomplishment for a company of our size. In our eyes, it's the role of the leader to invest in clinical studies. The competition copies what we are doing, I take it as a recognition of our work.

What are the key goals that you want to accomplish with Medac in France over the next few years, and your top priorities looking ahead?

Our main goal is to successfully launch Trecondi®, a Treosulfan-based conditioning therapy prior to stem cell transplantation. The launch is planned end of 2019, aiming to be the reference drug in this area. We have more products in our pipeline as we are capitalizing on the expertise we have in Hematology.

What do you value most working for a company like Medac?

I very much value the trust, autonomy and freedom the headquarters is giving us, which is not very common in the pharma industry. We are also very successful in recruiting young graduates and other professionals from everywhere in France, who want to contribute in shaping the French affiliate of Medac.

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