Mario Muniz – SVP & GM (North LATAM), IQVIA



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Mario Muniz, SVP and GM of IQVIA North LATAM, shares his motivations for joining IQVIA after nearly two decades with pharma and medtech companies, the huge potential of the North LATAM region as well as the important value that IQVIA can provide during this tumultuous period within the Mexican public healthcare sector.

Mario, you were appointed GM of IQVIA North LATAM in January 2019, having previously worked for companies like Mundipharma, Pfizer, Chiesi, Philips and Merit Medical Systems. What made you decide to join IQVIA?

After nearly 20 years within the industry, during which I worked in pharma and medical devices companies of different sizes and structures, I wanted to understand the other side of the business. The position was interesting because I would still be a GM owning the full P&L responsibility of the affiliate but on the service side with a slightly different way of engaging in the healthcare industry. In a service company, you have to develop different skills. For instance, as the GM of a pharma company, I typically had one boss to report to. At IQVIA, every client is my 'boss'. I need to have an incredibly broad attention span and oversight of the entire industry.

As a service and technology company, IQVIA is very different from a pharma or medtech company so when I joined, I had to first understand what is similar and what is different between the two sectors. The content is, of course, similar but the ways we deliver our services are very different.

What is particularly interesting is how to communicate and translate the value of what we bring to the table to different clients because different companies value different things. Some of our clients value their relationships with us a lot and seek to maintain a very open and free-flow dialogue with us in order to access our expertise. This helps them capture insights and translate them into action. Other clients are more internally driven. In all cases, collaboration is fundamental. As we touch base with hundreds of clients within the industry, we are in a position to collect insights, develop expertise and possess perspectives unique to IQVIA.

Mexico and the North LATAM area more generally has a lot of potential. The previous GM has assumed a regional role within IQVIA, focusing on consulting and technology expertise, and I think that with my background of having worked for both pharma and medtech companies in Brazil, Mexico and the rest of the LATAM region, I was a good fit for the regional North LATAM position. In particular, I am able to understand the challenges of our clients – the GMs of pharma companies that were previously my peers! – and bring a strong customer focus to see how we can best use our platforms, technology and expertise to help our clients address their challenges and capture the opportunities in the market.

What was your first objective as GM?

The first objective was to consolidate IQVIA North LATAM as a fully integrated company in Mexico and the region. As you know, IQVIA is the result of the mergers of three huge multinational companies with slightly different services and platforms: IMS Health, Cegedim and Quintiles. It was certainly an interesting challenge to integrate all three entities in Mexico.

What was exciting was that in October 2019, we finally moved into our current building to have everyone in the same office space. Previously, IQVIA operated across three different sites in Mexico City but now that everyone is together, it is easier for our employees to interact and collaborate with each other.

IQVIA is a company that leverages extremely strongly on collaboration. Not a single problem we work on requires the expertise of just one or two people. We are dealing with complex problems and market opportunities that require the collaboration of people from our technology, data and consulting teams. This is why we have a matrix organization designed to leverage on the platforms, resources and expertise that can be found across business units and countries.

My first challenge was, therefore, to bring everyone onto the same page, regardless of their service competences or expertise, to work together towards the same mission. Collaboration at a company like IQVIA really has a different meaning than in other companies in the industry.

More generally, could you highlight some of the key trends of the Mexican pharma market?

Mexico is still mainly an out-of-pocket market and this will not change in the near future. It is also a market driven by brands, be it originator brands or branded generics. As a result, companies invest heavily in promotional efforts and have to be conscious of increasing the effectiveness and efficiency of such efforts. We are also a market open to innovation. One of the main components of the growth in the market has been the entry of new products, whether they are fully innovative products or incremental innovations. This is another interesting aspect for both multinational and local companies to consider.

Medical education is another important aspect of the market. Our research indicates that medical education is something physicians expect from companies. The more physicians know about the diseases and the products, the better they can diagnose and treat their patients. Medical education is an ethical way of positioning the company and the brand while simultaneously providing a valuable service to physicians in Mexico. As the market becomes an ever more compliant pharma market, medical education will become an even more important avenue to increase the value of brands and products.

In terms of therapeutic areas, diabetes and oncology will continue to grow because they have patented products driving the growth. Diabetes is the most important segment of the market, partly as a result of the high incidence of diabetes in the Mexican population. Meanwhile, oncology, especially immuno-oncology, is growing very well, particularly in the private market. Underperforming areas include anti-obesity, ophthalmology and CNS, partly due to the lack of new innovative products. In CNS, for instance, the innovations that we see are mainly new presentations of the same molecules.

In terms of the local companies, we see three groups. Companies focusing on branded generics invest a lot in promotional efforts and have some of the largest salesforces in the country. Pure generics companies have mainly store brands and work with key pharmacy chains. Then there is a group of innovative Mexican companies hungry to bring real innovation to Mexico, so they are investing a lot in R&D, and we have already seen a couple of successes.

How important is Mexico in terms of clinical research?

Mexico is an extremely important country on the world stage and not a single significant global trial will exclude Mexico. In terms of clinical research, the most important part of our activity is to execute the Mexican part of these global trials.

In addition, we are also seeing increasing interest in local and even multinational companies to develop Phase IV studies in Mexico, focusing on Real World Evidence (RWE). We already have a couple of projects focusing on gathering data about products available on the market in Mexico. This is also helpful for companies looking to work on risk-sharing models, which is something that the current government has said they are open to.

You have a regional focus, overseeing Central America as well as the Caribbean in addition to Mexico. How different are these markets?

Certainly, these markets are more complex than Mexico. As a group of countries, they all require different commercial models. Some of our clients use distributors while some establish a direct presence. There is some regulatory harmonization between Mexico and Central America but each market still operates differently so it is challenging for companies that are, for instance, based in Mexico but looking to expand in the region. We actually organized a workshop recently for Mexican companies interested in growing their operations in Central America. While it might sometimes seem like LATAM is a homogenous region, it is definitely not!

I have also been very impressed by IQVIA’s presence across the region. At IQVIA, we are really part of a global company. The IQVIA culture is pervasive: no matter which country you work in, you feel part of IQVIA. This facilitates our regional operations a lot. We have very talented people working for IQVIA across the whole region, and it is good to see that no matter which country we are in, we value talented people across different roles in different parts of the organization. For me as a GM, the talent management philosophy is really to understand differences in culture, communication styles and collaboration models to ensure that everyone is on the same page.

Looking forward, what are your key priorities for IQVIA North LATAM?

The first is to consolidate IQVIA’s positioning as a technology company and add value to our customers. The second is to help the industry to seize the available opportunities and better deploy their efforts. Even if all the companies today use some kind of technological platform, the ways they optimize it can be completely different. Some companies have implemented best practices and are reaping all the benefits of the platform while others have not. We want to make them more effective and productive in the technology that we can provide.

The next step of success is to bring innovation to such a level that our customers say they cannot imagine a world without IQVIA! The best projects, the best solutions, the best implementations happen when we truly collaborate with our clients.

Do you have a final message to our international audience?

I would say that we have a very well-developed private market in Mexico that should not be forgotten because of the current attention on the public sector.

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