Ian Wilders – Managing Director, Labo’Life, Belgium

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Ian Wilders of Spain-headquartered micro-immunotherapy specialist Labo’Life discusses the strategic importance of Belgium to the company as the country in which micro-immunotherapy was discovered and where regulation conducive to the introduction of these therapies is increasingly being introduced.

It has been nearly one year since we first interviewed you in Spain. Have there been any major developments for Labo’Life during this time?

Labo’Life is continuing to expand its international operations as we make our first venture into the Colombian market in South America. Particularly in this difficult time in the world we see that people are turning to Labo’Life companies as they are becoming more conscious of their immune system and are searching for solutions in this area. Within the current health crisis we are facing, it is people of a certain age or immunocompromised that have a higher risk of morbidity. By taking care of the immune system people are putting chances on their side to keep healthy.

What is the significance of the Belgium operations of Labo’Life?

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for several reasons. First, Belgium is the capital of the EU which means having a presence here is very strategic for the purpose of following the most important European conversations and following where the direction of health in the EU is going. Second, we have forged a trusted relationship with the authorities when it comes to the registration of Labo'Life products. This plays an important part in our international expansion thanks to the credibility that comes with having our products registered in Belgium. This was a very helpful factor in our entrance into Colombia. Third, Labo'Life has a production plant in Namur which brings a resilience to the whole group. This asset allows for the flexibility to create smaller batches for the country but also boost production to match Spain during demand surges. Finally, Belgium is also a logistics hub for Labo'Life which is a typical story for Europe. Although most of our products are produced in Spain, they often pass through Belgium to meet demand from wherever it comes.

What is the scale of Labo'Life's production unit in the country?

Our Namur manufacturing facility represents approximately ten percent of the group's total output. The plant acts more of a backup resource having the possibility to upscale when necessary, with about five people working on production there.

Why is Belgium a strategic market for Labo'Life?

The way that regulation of micro-immunotherapy has been taken into account in Belgium makes the country very attractive. Here we have had a very stable situation for many years in which we have been able to work with the authorities in a very intelligent way. Regulatory stability is essential for a company such as Labo'Life. Micro-immunotherapy is low-dose immunotherapy and is something that is relatively new. These products open innovative regulatory questions and while they do fit in with some other medicinal products, we cannot simply use run of the mill protocols to properly evaluate them. With the authorities, we are trying to explore how regulations can better work for us.

How is the regulatory environment for micro-immunotherapy different between Belgium and Spain where Labo'Life is headquartered?

Currently, micro-immunotherapy falls into the regulatory category of homeopathic products. In Spain, the framework to register these products was not put in place until last year. We are in the process of registering our micro-immunotherapy medicines in Spain, but they do not have any past experience with these products. On the other hand, in Belgium, we had the opportunity very early on to properly communicate with the authorities about micro-immunotherapy and present each of our products. Therefore, we have been able to work and learn together on how to create a favorable environment for the access of micro-immunotherapy.

Furthermore, as we are entering the market through homeopathic regulation there is an ongoing movement in Europe which is making the argument that these therapies do not have their place in medicine. The de reimbursement we are seeing in France is a mistake because there is in fact very interesting science behind this category of products with knowledge-based experiences of doctors who see the benefits. Still, there is a dogmatic view of this area where regulations are used to make things difficult for innovative companies like Labo'Life. However, in Belgium, the regulators are less influenced by such a movement which is really just a select handful of people making a lot of noise.

How is micro-immunotherapy viewed by the Belgian medical community and patients?

Our products are very well received in Belgium and in sales per capita it is one of the leading markets globally for Labo'Life. Doctors are looking for solutions with scientific grounding and Labo'Life's products are based in immunotherapy but also work in symphony with patients' immune systems. What medical professionals value is the ability to utilize all their options and include micro-immunotherapy in their therapeutic strategy While there are certain standardized treatments in healthcare, not all patients fit into these protocols so there needs to be innovative/body-friendly solutions that can be adapted to each patient.

How would you assess the level of education and awareness around micro-immunotherapy in Belgium?

Education is something that is ongoing even in a market like Belgium. We are working with medical specialists, in particular, to explain how micro-immunotherapy fits into their treatment strategies. An immunologist will have a very good base of knowledge which will help to understand our products and how they work. Still, not all doctors use immunology very regularly, so they do need

to be freshened up.

With the current global health crisis of COVID19, to what extent does this situation raise awareness about the importance of solutions that preemptively maintain the immune system?

This is of course not an opportunity to market Labo'Life, nevertheless, we have seen that there has been a lot of demand from doctors, pharmacists, and patients for such products. In these types of situations, it is important to keep up a good immune system so naturally doctors who have heard of our products approach us to better understand how micro immunotherapy can help. There is a great interest in these products in regard to a health crisis like COVID19 as we are realizing that even when specific medicines or vaccines do not exist for a certain disease, we always have our own immune systems to protect ourselves. Many people have therefore turned to micro-immunotherapy and other solutions rather than just wait for a hypothetical vaccine. While we do need to have greater technology in healthcare, we also need a wider scope of the options that can help as we see with the significant use of traditional Chinese medicines across Asia. The occidental medicines with the technology we have still have many gaps and we expect more patients and doctors to move towards an integrative approach that can use products like micro-immunotherapy in a preventative and complementary way.

Is there any final message you would like to deliver to the international healthcare community?

We have got to keep the richness of the offer we currently have today. There is no single solution for a patient, rather a mixture of tailored approaches. We must keep this diversity to maintain the resilience of our health industry – it is through this richness that we will reach greater outcomes.

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