

Interview with Laurena Magnoni, President, Besins Healthcare Brazil



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Besins finally arrived in Brazil in 2010. In addition to introducing the company to the market, would you also elaborate on the strategic motivation behind this decision?

Besins Healthcare is a pharmaceutical company specialized in the development and worldwide diffusion of innovative drugs and food supplements for the well-being of men and women throughout their life.

The company has established a strong reputation in gynaecology over the past 30 years playing a key role in hormonal therapies for women and men.

Why Brazil? Antoine Besins, our President, who is in charge of global affairs, has decided to invest in the pharmerging market. Brazil was one of the countries chosen as it is number 7 in the rank of global pharmaceutical markets (IMS 2010 data). It is a two-fold logic: Firstly, Brazil is number one in Latin America market, and Secondly Besins knows that it's easier to reach other LA markets from Brazil. The first product we plan to launch in Brazil is Androgel.

Androgel is a Natural Testosterone Gel, patient friendly, developed under a novel technology. There is nothing similar in our market. Currently, there are only two alternative treatments available in Brazil: orals and injectables.

Two products are already licensed to Farmoquimica: a progesterone named Utrogestan, which is the number one product of the company, and the worldwide unique natural micronized progesterone and oestrogel, Natural Estradiol using Transdermal Delivery Technology. Utrogestan is the market leader of progesterone in Brazil.

As purchasing power rises and income inequality decreases over time, this clearly presents a huge opportunity for Besins. What are the advantages of a gel vs. more traditional oral or injection delivery methods?

That is a good question, however hard to be answered shortly!

The gel presents many advantages compared to other therapies, but the main advantage is that it is the closest to the Testosterone produced by the body, and therefore, the most natural.

Transdermal absorption keeps testosterone level stable, with no peaks nor valleys seen with injectables. The gel is not hepatotoxic either, like the orals available in the market.

How will you go about doing that? Another important element is obviously price. How are you going to drive doctor, and thus patient, acceptance?

There are two ways to tackle the situation: the first one is to increase the awareness of the testosterone deficiency syndrome, selling the concept of how to treat the disease by educating physicians and patients about it; and secondly to gain market share. Our idea is to work on both fronts. However, we do need to provide doctors with more scientific information so that they can see the reality outside Latin America and how different treatments impact the hypogonadism. We do not know yet the price in Brazil. We must submit the dossier of the product to be registered at ANVISA first. After ANVISA's approval, the price to the consumer will be analysed by CMED.

You're here from ground zero, even before the planned launch of new products in September of 2012. What are the key elements you have brought to table in terms of management style?

First of all, I want to show stakeholders: physicians, patients, distributions and employees that Besins is a reference company when it comes to women and men's healthcare in Latin America. Our mission is to provide innovative products and service with excellence, commitment, and proactivity.

Besins also focus on opportunities. A company like ours can react faster with more flexibility. Our CEO, Leslie Grunfeld, gives us autonomy and flexibility because he wants to see our market strategy customized in Brazil. This is my style of work, that is, to focus on the needs of the market making necessary adjustments to fit.

The success of the business depends on every chain working together. It is not only the General Manager, but all areas involved in the business, such as: Regulatory Affairs, Quality Assurance, Marketing, Sales and other departments. We, as a group, must be determined and do our best to succeed.

In the five to 10 year time horizon, what is your vision for Besins here in Brazil?

We have a long-term strategy to be within the top 100 pharmaceutical companies in Brazil, and we believe that with the products Besins has, it is possible. If you understand the market, if you have a good team with motivated people, you get there!

On a personal note, you're one of very few women we've met in Brazil, which tends to be a male-dominated industry. What's the biggest challenge you find as a woman managing a pharmaceutical company in Brazil and what's your main competitive advantage?

Our main advantage is our determination. We know what we want, both personally and professionally. Why? Because women usually have many tasks to manage with, such as the house, the children and their daily routine, therefore, we must be very objective concerning the tasks to be done. We must set priorities, plan ahead and follow-up all tasks. Success in the end depends on performance, and if a woman knows what she wants, she can reach 100% of it.

What's your final message to Pharmaceutical Executive readers?

I am very enthusiastic about the situation of Besins in Brazil. We have a great opportunity, a great market, and we can certainly reach what the company expects us to. I also believe that the Brazilian Pharmaceutical Market has changed and improved a lot concerning Regulatory demands. Nowadays it is much clearer, and we can follow all regulations. The next chapter of Besins Brazil is promising: we know we can do it. My final message is: "whatever your goal is, it can be reached; however, the way to get it must be carefully analysed and carefully planned before hand." We make our own luck!

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