Sandoz Argentina – Mariano de Elizade, General Manager of South Latam



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The general manager of Sandoz South Latam weighs up the factors that have allowed his company to be the leader in biosimilars and differentiated generics.

Could you please give us a broad overview of the generics market in Argentina over the last decade?

The dynamics of the generic market in Argentina haven't changed drastically. Argentina is a pure branded stable generics market. If we have a look at the share of the pure generics products, the figures show a flat behavior at less than two percent variation in the last ten years.

What was the mission assigned to you from Sandoz's Swiss headquarters?

Firstly, to ensure broader access to high quality medicines at affordable prices; then, at a local level, my main mission is to be able to develop sustainable growth. Here in Argentina, due to the volatility of the market, it is crucial to have an agile organization to grow in a sustainable way.

What role does the Argentinian operation play for Sandoz worldwide?

We have our regional fair share within Sandoz global operations. Today, in Latin America, we are the third country in turnover, right after Brazil and Mexico. We are definitely a relevant country for the Latin American region and the Latin American region is as relevant as it is for any other industry.

What is the position of Sandoz in Argentina and which have been the most recent milestones of the company?

Sandoz, the generic pharmaceuticals division of Novartis, is a worldwide leader in generics.

Our strategic and customer-focused approach to development, producing and market high-quality affordable medicines following the loss of patent protection has made us one of the two largest and most respected generics companies worldwide.

Nevertheless, on a global scale, there have been many strategic adjustments in the last years. We are today the number one worldwide player in state -of-the-art biosimilars, a newly emerging field in which Sandoz is the pioneer. We are focus in differentiated generics, what we call « difficult to make products ».

In Argentina, Sandoz decided to focus in segments where the company is already strong, and where we know we can compete. We are strongly focused as a result on very specific segments of the market: niches like oncology, oncohematology, transplants, and growth hormones.

Sandoz worldwide has a portfolio of approximately 1,100 high-quality molecules. How well does Sandoz Argentina's product portfolio complement the specific needs of the Argentinian patient and most important, which are the main growth drivers?

In some countries, like Germany for instance, Sandoz offers the broadest portfolio available. In Argentina, for many reasons, we are selling a much smaller range of products: difficult to make products in the therapeutic areas I already explained, plus an extra strong presence in antibiotics. Having said that, the main growth drivers in the last two to three years have been transplant, growth hormones and oncohematology.

Sandoz is today the number one worldwide player in the state -of-the-art biosimilars. What is your role when it comes to biosimilar products in Argentina?

The term 'biosimilar' is a registration pathway in Europe while.In Argentina, we see a great opportunity for high quality biosimilar products at affordable prices. If you give more units of high quality products, you can give access to more people that need this kind of treatment with the

same amount of money for the health system. That is our mission.

How would you assess market access in Argentina?

Registering a product in Argentina is not a problem. Argentina has a very strong and solid healthcare system. There is very good coverage of the people, probably the best in all the Latin America countries. Moreover, we also find here that some special treatments have 100 percent coverage.

What differentiates Sandoz from other generic companies?

Being part of Novartis group gives to Sandoz strong backup: we belong to one of the five biggest pharmaceutical groups in the world. We have access to the strongest pipeline of products in the world, development centers, manufacturing centers, and high quality products. I would never expect a quality issue within my range of products. This is extremely valuable in the market. Many players in the market value working with a company with Swiss quality standards. Sandoz has its own quality signature.

Richard Francis, Sandoz's global CEO, in his appointment speech in May 2014, was talking a lot about human development. How is Sandoz Argentina working on the development of their employees?

We have an outstanding internal talent management system. We first map the talent and then we offer different type of activities for pool of talents. On top of that, Sandoz SouLat has a great executive team. It is a very professional team, very flexible and adaptable. When you realize that people have many different abilities, you feel incredibly proud of the human capital level within the organization. Flexible executives are always preferred, and that is what we are getting from each of our employees. People who can find different ways of doing better business and improving processes at the same time.

What, from your experiences in Germany, Australia and Mexico, would you say is helping you to navigate in the very challenging market of Argentina?

Working in a multinational generics company like Sandoz in an emerging market I do personally think is a big challenge. You need a lot of resilience. You need to adapt as fast as possible.

That is what is helping me the most. As you mentioned, I had been in very different countries where adaptation was required from the first minute. I have moved ten times in nine years, changing position roughly every year and a half. It is definitely an exercise. You need to adapt

quick or you are out. Flexibility is a must. This is something that you developed and as I said, that is what I think helped me the most.

What advice would you give to a foreign general manager coming to work in Argentina?

I don’t believe that there is only one way to come to a place and work and be good on what you do. Nevertheless, as an Argentinian, I would say that patience and constant flexibility to adapt to daily changes are the most important qualities you have to show.

What is the outlook of Sandoz in Argentina?

Sandoz is always developing new products with new technologies, our signature difficult to make products. There is an outstanding pipeline in biosimilars. Thus, what I foresee for Sandoz here is a growth opportunity base on difficult to make products in some segments and niches. This is our back bone of growth and will remain the same.

What would be your final message to our international readers?

Argentina is going through tough times but it is still very well positioned to give plenty of opportunities in the mid long term.

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