

Mundipharma Mexico - Francisco Rodriguez, General Director



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During 2013 Mundipharma entered Brazil, Mexico and Colombia to consolidate its presence in the Latin American region. The general director for Mexico discusses the company's plans to become leader in pain management, the innovative formulations it is offering and how flexibility is key to success in an ever-changing world.

Mundipharma started operations in Mexico, Brazil and Colombia during 2013. What was the strategic plan of the company behind entering the Latin American market?

Mundipharma started in the US over 60 years ago, expanding later to Europe and Asia. In Latin America the company has been present for a number of years, but through distributors. Given the opportunities the Latin American market offers in terms of unmet medical needs, aging population, size and epidemiological profile, more recently the company decided to consolidate its presence in the region starting operations in Brazil first, then followed by Colombia and Mexico. From these three hubs we manage the remaining markets, which still rely on distributorships; from Mexico, for example, we control Central America.

What are the company's expectations towards the Mexican market?

Mexico is undergoing significant changes, as authorities are undertaking measures to ensure growth in the long-term. The Mexican market offers a number of opportunities due to the size of

the population, the need for innovation and quality.

In Mexico we want Mundipharma to be recognized as leader in pain management for its wide product portfolio and the innovative technology the company offers. A recent example is the launch of a new tamper-resistant Oxycodone, which is a potent pain reliever and reduces abuse of the product, ensuring quality and efficacy, but also security for the patient. Having such new formulations was one of the main reasons for Mundipharma to decide to strengthen its presence in such a controlled market as Mexico, where the sale of opioids is strictly controlled.

On the other hand, we also want to closely work with the local authorities and medical community to make sure patients have access to palliative care and are treated adequately. In Mexico more than 28 million people suffer from chronic pain – which is huge.

Why do you think pain is undertreated in Mexico? What are the barriers to an adequate treatment of pain?

Patients face important difficulties to get access to palliative care here in Mexico. First, because of the tight regulation, which makes it difficult even for the doctor to prescribe painkillers, as they need a special approval by COFEPRIS (the Federal Commission for the Protection against Sanitary Risk). These days the authority announced changes in the regulation, but today it still is a major hindrance. Second, importing and exporting this type of substances in the country requires a cumbersome approval process. Last but not least, doctors lack a proper education with regard to pain management.

How are you working with the local medical community to make sure pain is treated correctly?

We work very closely with the medical community to ensure doctors are up-to-date, demystify the use of opioids, which are the standard of care in the rest of the world, and above all understand that pain can and should be avoided. It really implies a change of mindset, as people often do not think about quality of life.

During the past year we have been focused on the strategic planning of the company and upcoming product launches. To do so, we have been collaborating with key opinion leaders to better understand how pain is treated today, how pain clinics work and what type of product technology is already available in the market. We are participating in congresses to better understand what are the needs, so to adjust our portfolio and make sure the company's value proposition is recognized.

What kind of differentiators does Mundipharma offer to the market?

The most important differentiator is the technology and innovation of Mundipharma's products, such as the abuse-deterrent formulation of the new tamper-resistant Oxycodone. This is the type of technology for which the company is renown worldwide. The product will be ready for launch within the next couple of months and it will be a game changer in the market. Indeed, only if combined with the adequate education efforts with the medical community, patients and institutions.

What has the acceptance towards the company's value proposition so far?

I must admit I was positively surprised to see how well accepted the company and its value added are. We have received a lot of support from authorities such as COFEPRIS and the General Health Council. The standard of care for pain treatment needs to be improved in the country and this represents a huge opportunity. As a result, we are moving very fast in the execution of our pipeline of products to expand operations in the market in different therapeutic areas. Besides our Oxycodone, we will soon be launching an oncology product and five new products in the next three to five years, among others in the rheumatoid arthritis, respiratory and consumer healthcare areas.

Mundipharma is somehow a different pharmaceutical company. It defines itself as a boutique organization that is built on an entrepreneurial spirit. What advantages does it offer in a highly competed market as the Mexican one?

First and foremost, flexibility. This is an organization, where most of the things are to be done. We have a vision and a strategic plan, but because of this entrepreneur spirit we are able to adjust the strategy to each market. In a large pharma giant usually there is a top-down strategy, which everybody needs to follow. At Mundipharma we really have the opportunity to innovate, challenge and speed up processes - and that makes a crucial difference in a world, which requires so much flexibility. At this stage of my career, this is very engaging for me.

Besides, Mundipharma differentiates from other companies by investing 14% of their incomes in Research and Development of new technologies putting patients first.

The company has five R&D centers around the globe looking forward for new therapies and expanding to another areas as oncology, hematology, respiratory and Consumer Health Care.

You need people that fit this type of spirit. How did you make sure that the human capital that now works at Mundipharma shares the same vision?

For a company like Mundipharma you need a very special profile of people. You need someone who is able to see the broad picture, but also has the capacity of execution. I must admit I am very proud of my team, because each of them – everyone with their level of seniority, as you need the right balance between high-experienced people and new talent – fits this vision. As a result, after building up and envisioning the company, today we are ready to execute.

You have been working at Pfizer for almost 20 years. What challenge attracted you to Mundipharma?

I finished my cycle at Pfizer after 18 years of successful career. Over this time I learned a lot and also made a great contribution to position the company where it is today. After having spent so many years at this important drug maker, what attracted me to Mundipharma was the opportunity to start up a company from scratch. I am myself an entrepreneur, but having the opportunity to initiate a business in the sector I am most familiar with and with an international background was something very interesting to me. When I got to know the organization I told myself: this is the type of company I want to be part of.

Where would you like to see Mundipharma in Mexico in five years from now?

I would like to see the company recognized as a company devoted to pain treatment that really provides value added to the patient and to society and working very closely with stakeholders to improve how pain is managed in Mexico. Today my most important responsibility is to ensure the right set of strategies and competences for the company to be able to deliver its potential and provide what the market needs.

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