Interview: Onder Isinay – General Manager, Biocodex Turkey



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Biocodex's new general manager gives an overview of the affiliates 'new deal' program, and how the company has adjusted its approach to better fit the contemporary Turkish environment.

What attracted you to Biocodex Turkey? What are your impressions of the business so far?

Biocodex made the right decision in starting up the business in Turkey under its own brand. Previously, it had been present in the country through Sanofi, under a French partnership model, but in 2009 the company took the decision to establish a Biocodex affiliate in Turkey. The market seemed promising: a growing population and increased focus on the pharmaceutical industry from the government. But the change in regulation came at around the same time, which saw price cuts and discounts affecting the whole market. Biocodex lost reimbursement status on a lot of its products, which in turn led to a drop in those products being prescribed.

This led to a shift in strategy, from focusing on reimbursed products to adopting more of a focus on pharmacies and OTC with additional portfolio. This was done in a very challenging environment: at the same time this refocusing was happening, the company was downsizing and reorganizing. The field force had experience detailing to physicians; now they were being asked to promote to pharmacies. There were certainly a large number of challenges. The company worked to bring more OTC products into Turkey, establishing partnerships with Sinclair and Pierre Fabre for a

number of products. Yet, during the transition, Biocodex had struggled in Turkey.

By 2013, it was decided that the subsidiary in Turkey would be restarted: a new deal for the affiliate was established. Following reorganization a new business strategy started. Moreover, the company also stopped promoting some of the OTC products it had under partnership, focusing on Reflor, our probiotic yeast product, along with a limited number of additional products in the portfolio.

How does your current portfolio compare to global, and which introductions would you like to make?

We are in line only with Reflor and Otipax our new product launched in 2014. With this portfolio, we promote to pediatricians and pharmacies. In the global portfolio, we have prescription products in the CNS line that are not registered in Turkey, but we need a clear investment strategy before we add them to our portfolio here.

How does Turkey look today for the company?

Turkey is still a very promising market. We are far from alone in the world when it comes to challenging market conditions. With a strong strategic plan, there is a lot of room for growth here for Biocodex, because we have a lot of potential to increase our portfolio with a number of different products. We would like to utilize pricing flexibility, as none of our products here are on the reimbursement list.

My first ambition is to clearly understand the potential and the required investment to grow here. We might consider changing the portfolio registration strategy to face the new opportunities.

To what extent is Biocodex HQ open to you bringing new ideas to the table, and what ideas have you had so far?

Although we have experienced challenges and downsizing, headquarters still believes in Turkey. As we over perform this year, it is clear that we can bring additional value to the company, and so Biocodex will continue to invest here. We would like to secure sustainable growth without relying too much on support from HQ. In the longer term, I hope to find partners here in Turkey for licensing, in line with our current strategy. In order to do this, we will have to work hard to build the culture and competitiveness in the OTC business, in order to attract partners. I believe that the market will keep shifting towards pharmacies as access barriers continue to exist here.

What is the energy and vision you bring that trickles down to the rest of the organization?

Having struggled in the past, the comeback in 2014 was a great success, and has motivated the organization here. What I want is to inspire them more, and show the company that each employee can do more with the current portfolio. I want to invest in the winning culture with my team as we have the portfolio, and potential brands; now it’s time to level up.

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