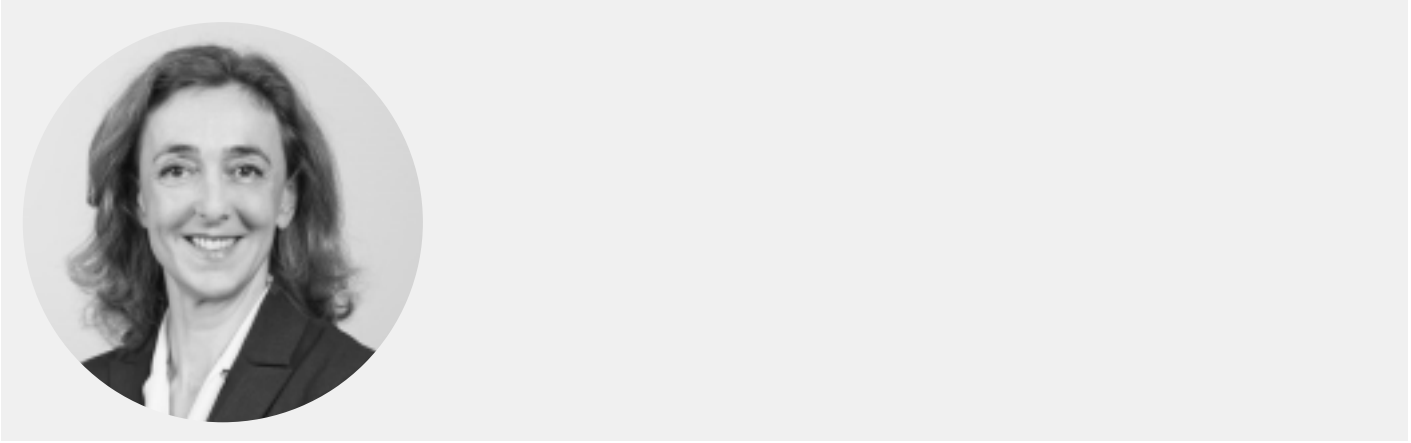
Interview: Emmanuelle Ribot-Mariotte – General Manager, Alfa Wassermann Pharma France



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Emmanuelle Ribot-Mariotte, general manager of Alfa Wassermann Pharma France, reveals how over the past year the company has been working hard on a new innovative treatment for hepatic encephalopathy, Rifaximin-alpha 500,

and why their strategy is to focus on gastro-intestinal diseases, a field which has always been at the heart of the Alfa Wassermann Group.

You have been general manager of Alfa Wassermann France since 2014. What have been the key achievements for the affiliate during this period?

Over the past year the company has been working very hard on a new product which we expect to launch in 2016, Rifaximin-alpha 500. For now, the product is still in the market access process. Rifaximin-alpha is a well-known molecule, an innovative treatment for hepatic encephalopathy (HE), a serious neuropsychiatric condition associated with liver disease that impacts heavily on the quality of life and the life expectancy of patients. Around 150 000 to 200,000 people suffer from the condition in Europe. HE is a very serious disease and yet there is currently no cure for it. Our product is the first treatment to receive an approved indication following clinical study. In France we received the market authorization for Rifaximin-alpha 500mg in January 2015. Alfa Wassermann Pharma and its partner Norgine will jointly promote and manage the clinical development of

Rifaximine alpha 550 mg in France. Previously the product was available to a select number of patients under the ATU de cohorte (Temporary Authorisations for Use) procedure. This particular ATU is distinct from the ATU nominative, which is for a specific patient, and concerns rather a group of patients, treated and monitored according to criteria fully defined by a protocol outlining its therapeutic use.

Alfa Wassermann brands itself as having an Italian heart and an international outlook. In this context, what is the strategic position of France for the Group, the fifth largest pharma market in the world, and the second largest in Europe?

France is a very important affiliate for the Group, although we have been facing a number of difficulties due to our structure and product portfolio in recent times. Historically the group´s product portfolio was based on a range of products that were not available in France. We had foreseen France to be one of the earliest countries where we would launch Rifaximin-alpha 500, acting as a primary gateway to the rest of Alfa Wassermann affiliates in Europe. Unfortunately, the launch of this product has faced a number of delays. Coupled with the issue of price decreases, the French affiliate has faced a number of challenges. Today we are back on track and results are improving. Building a strong affiliate in France, where the legislative environment does not allow for much flexibility, especially for a company with relatively mature products and low prices, takes time and a lot of persistence.

2015 was a year of transition for the French affiliate. We have re-organized the team based on future expectations, in line with our business model and our future portfolio development. In the past it was difficult to have a clear and stable vision for the portfolio. Today the roadmap has been set, and we can now develop the affiliate based on our successful business model. In France we have reinforced our position in the pharmacy channel, given that we have a lot of products that are not on the reimbursement list. Even though we are a drug company and not an OTC company, we have number of non-ethical, non-reimbursed drugs, and as such have had to develop skills and competencies amongst our sales force team. We have activated this channel to support our overall business, but our aim will always be to have our drugs prescribed and recommended by doctors as key products for patients.

Our strategy is to focus on the gastro-intestinal area, which is the heart of the Alfa Wassermann Group. We are present in IBS, constipation and diarrhoea, and with the launch of Rifaximin-alpha 500 we will be active in a further major gastro-intestinal related area, namely hepatic encephalopathy.

On a more personal note, before becoming general manager of Alfa Wassermann, you had extensive experience in sales and marketing. How has this benefited you when it comes to your current role?

It is true that I started at Alfa Wassermann as a sales and marketing director. Having managed people has helped me tremendously in my current job. In France we are a pure commercial entity, therefore my background in sales and marketing has proved extremely useful. This is particularly true when it comes to recruiting the best sales reps for our business.

My objective is to manage with fairness, leading the team by example, always taking the right and the fair decision, from both a company and people perspective. Working in a company such as Alfa Wassermann, which is very close to its employees, only strengthens my desire to manage with fairness, something to which the Golinelli family, the owners of Alfa Wassermann, attach a great deal of importance.

What is it that you most appreciate when it comes to working for an Italian company?

Sometimes in France, Italians are perceived to be rather disorganised. My experience of Italians has been that they are very pragmatic people, and that their style is comparable, in many regards, to the American way of doing business. Conducting business with Italians is always very straight to the point, and this is something I greatly appreciate.

What would be your final message to our international readers?

France remains a country where you can achieve great results. Despite the often-talked about challenges, there remain great opportunities for pharmaceutical companies to create added value. In our industry you can have both an exciting career and bring real benefits to people through your work. When alongside that you belong to a company that holds strong ethical values, it is extremely rewarding. Our mission is to provide patients with access to the best treatments. We aim to be a strong player not only for patients, but for the entire health and well-being spectrum. It is increasingly difficult to speak to doctors, and it is forbidden to speak to the patient. Increasingly we are conducting educational activities with patient associations, not merely as an indirect form of promotion, but as a strong statement of our willingness to support the entire network, from the patient to the care-giver, the family and the environment. Helping the patient through their disease journey is of utmost importance to pharmaceutical companies. We look to take a holistic view of the patient and the different interactions that are required for their improved health.

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