Interview: Dr. Éva Kádár – Managing Director, Wörwag Pharma Hungary



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The managing director of Wörwag Pharma Hungary, Dr. Éva Kádár depicts the company's impressive evolution, highlighting the expansive network of neuropathy centers that they've helped establish all over Hungary and the extent of their efforts in creating more awareness for this disorder.

As an introduction for our readers, Éva, can you please provide some insight into your background and describe how exactly you came to lead the Wörwag affiliate here in Hungary?

I wanted to be my own boss; therefore, I searched for opportunities that would effectively incorporate both my background and specialties, while also being related to healthcare. It just so happened that at this time Wörwag Pharma had been looking for someone to help establish their presence in Hungary.

Presented with the prospect of building up a pharmaceutical business from scratch, I decided to undertake the challenge, which was by no means an easy process. I often had to spearhead various tasks and functions on my own, spanning sales and marketing, registration, and the scientific aspects as well.

Now, after 23 years, the company has over 50 staff members, consisting of a sales department with 40 members, 2 main product lines, and roughly 20 brands.

In terms of strategic priorities, Wörwag has long been supporting healthcare development through education, diagnostic tools, and treatment options—especially in the field of neuropathy.

What initiatives has Wörwag undertaken to help tackle this particular disorder in Hungary?

Neuropathy is one of three microvascular complications of diabetes, alongside retinopathy and diabetic nephropathy, whose end stages culminate in blindness and kidney failure respectively. For diabetic neuropathy, patients are at increased risk for leg amputations, due to nerve damage that often leaves small wounds completely unnoticed—eventually leading to ulcers or life-threatening infections.

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Spanning the last 20 to 25 years, worldwide efforts to materially reduce the number of leg amputations have failed—even in western countries such as the United States. Therefore, starting in Hungary, Wörwag has taken a specific interest in raising awareness for the diagnosis and treatment of this complication by building up a network of neuropathy centers. This initiative began with the first center opening up in 1998, alongside the establishment of the National Neuropathy Screening and Education Center at Semmelweis University. Since then, this network has expanded to 13 neuropathy centers until today, and we have ambitions of doubling that number to have at least one center in each county by 2020. Early diagnosis, early treatment—this is the underlying concept behind our centers, and they've certainly amounted to a relatively substantial investment. But it's something we have every intention of continuing moving forward.

How would you evaluate the prevalence of neuropathy among other more common disease burdens in Hungary such as cardiovascular and oncological?

The disorder stems from many origins, such as kidney, liver, or oncological diseases, but the highest incidence rates comes from people with diabetes. And the burden of diabetes in Hungary is quite high, affecting approximately 8 to 10 percent of the population, with a corresponding rate of neuropathy in these individuals ranging anywhere from 20 to 100 percent. The reason for this wide range is due to the vast differences in the accuracy and precision of diagnostic equipment.

In light of these statistics, how have you adapted the company's product portfolio to effectively address the clinical needs of Hungarian citizens?

Our portfolio is structured thematically. One segment is diabetes and associated complications, and on a more boarder scale, also includes metabolic syndromes. The range of these therapies encompasses both generic and OTC medicines for oral anti-diabetic, anti-hypertensive, and lipid lowering drugs, and of course, treatment for neuropathy.

In the first year Wörwag entered the Hungarian market, we launched 3 products, 2 of which were solely focused on treating neuropathy—Milgamma and Benfogamma. Now, we have products for both causal and symptomatic treatment for neuropathy.

The other segment is deficiency syndromes, including magnesium, iron, zinc and vitamin D deficiencies. In regard to the latter, a recent study concluded that 94 percent of Hungarians have some degree of vitamin D deficiency. This is somewhat of an alarming statistic, as too little vitamin D can lead to several health complications including weak bones and teeth, as well as reduced function of the immune system.

With the influx of many players entering this particular industry segment recently, what factors have allowed Wörwag to maintain a competitive edge?

We have several products that are unique in Hungary. But, we also have products that aren't that different from what our competitors offer, particularly when it comes to symptomatic treatment of neuropathy. In this case, I can confidently say that Wörwag is the first company that offers not only treatment options, but also diagnostic tools for neuropathy.

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What role does Wörwag play in educating stakeholders on the awareness, treatment, and prevention of diabetes in the community?

Technically, everyone, to varying degrees, is at risk of contacting diabetes at some point or another in their life. So, I believe they should be educated on the disease and become familiar with the type of complications that can ensue if left untreated.

Diabetes screening serves a crucial role, particularly in a defined risk population such as patients with hypertension, hyperlipidemia, and heart infarction.

It's important that people suffering from neuropathy are able to recognize the symptoms, as well as the underlying causes of these symptoms to effectively direct their course of treatment with the appropriate medical professionals—whether that's with a diabetologists, orthopedist, internist, cardiologist, etc. Neuropathy, for example, can affect not only the sensory nervous system, but

also the autonomic nervous system, which involves the entire body.

This is why ever since entering the Hungarian market, we've been organizing post-graduate courses for doctors and for pharmacists, while also partnering with various clubs to organize educational events for patients with diabetes.

Looking back, what would you define as your primary success factors?

I am a success-oriented woman. Therefore, the challenge has always been my main motivational driver—not money or other materialistic goals. Even till this day, the thought of expanding our presence to positively impact the community inspires me more and more. This is also why I obtained an MBA degree, to effectively complement my medical background with the management side of the business. It was a very helpful decision that has allowed me to maintain a comprehensive and encompassing perspective whenever taking any decision, and it's decision something I encourage all of my peers in the industry to pursue as well.

Having spent that last 23 years as a part of the Wörwag family, what qualities do you believe truly distinguish the organization from its peers in the industry?

I was actually admitted to this company by the founder, Dr. Fritz Wörwag. And even though the organization's legacy spans more than 40 years, it's core values have never changed—even after the founder's offspring took over the management in 2000.

Hungary was actually the first market that Wörwag entered outside of Germany in 1993—the first step in what has been a tremendous international expansion. The company is now active in 40 countries, spanning South America, Europe, Asia, North Africa, and the Middle East.

To this end, I believe Wörwag is truly a success story among the international pharmaceutical community. We've come a long way, especially in my tenure with the company, but I'm confident that there's an even brighter future ahead of us.

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