Interview: Jaume Pey – Director General, Spanish Association of Self-Care (ANEFP)

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Jaume Pey, director general at the Spanish Association of Self-care (ANEFP), discusses the growth projections of the self-care segment in Spain, the impact that the 'supresión del control previo sanitario'

(suppression of prior health control) has had on the advertising campaigns of ANEFP's members, as well as the importance of doctors, pharmacists and nurses in disseminating good self-medication practices.

2018 marked the 40th anniversary of the Association of Self-Care (ANEFP). What exciting prospects are there in 2018?

It is safe to say that we are a very mature organization. 40 years of strong footprint can only be accomplished by carrying out good work. The self-care sector is growing significantly and, while it only grew by 1.1 percent over the past year, reviews from 2013 suggest that the growth predictions are on average six percent. As a result, I reckon that we are able to reach growth rates between two and four percent. In order to succeed and keep up the good work, we need a favorable legislation that takes into account the speed of the market growth – the value of the brand being a crucial element, for instance. In the self-care segment, the brand plays a fundamental role. The well-established and most sold products are those associated with safety and quality standards, but also the ones that are best known by consumers. To this regard, brand-awareness is key. This growth shows that users increasingly acquire more self-care products, which

indicates an economic improvement.

Can you give us an overview of the self-care sector in Spain?

Our sector is divided into different major groups: over the counter (OTC) medicines, medical devices, food supplements, herbal drugs, biocosmetics and biocides. OTC medicines (non-prescription medicines) only accounts for 18 percent of the total self-care market, so it would be imprecise to only take this segment into account when describing the sector. Nevertheless, when speaking about brand-awareness, OTC comes back into the spotlight. Umbrella branding will be a very important issue in the future, especially for products that are very mature in prescriptions.

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In recent years, the most significant legislative update in the OTC segment has been the '*supresión del control previo sanitario*', by which OTC medicines can now be advertised without the Ministry of Health further analysing. How effective has it been so far and how has this impacted the growth of the OTC sector in Spain?

When the Ministry of Health decided to get rid of the *'supresión del control previo sanitario'* (suppression of prior health control), we had the opportunity to have a co-regulation system. In fact, medicines that do not require a prescription and that are not financed by public funds can be freely advertised. As soon as this was legalized, companies who had an interest in advertising their projects would need to wait up to three months in order to have their advertising campaign approved – which is a very long timeline if you have urgent marketing needs. Now, we brought it down to a weekly recurrence. It can be best described as a joint-venture between the Minister of Health and ANEFP. On a weekly basis, a technical from the Minister of Health comes here and assess with our Market and Regulatory Department about 20 projects at once – in terms of efficiency it is extraordinary. Since 2013, we evaluated 3,500 projects and all of them were flawless. We have to be thankful for the collaboration of the Ministry of Health, and we are very satisfied with this recognition, which stands as a benchmark for the responsibility of the industry towards the consumers.

However, advertising laws in Spain are very outdated – the Royal Decree on Advertising was issued in 1994 – and as you can imagine the accuracy of advertising changed over the past 24 years, especially given the fact that Internet did not exist back then. We have proactively requested an update of the advertising law to the Minister of Health. In the meantime, it is very important that we give our members a precise guideline and I am confident that we are going to receive this document very soon, because we agreed on the regulation with the Minister of Health and there

was a general wide consensus.

What are going to be the priorities for ANEFP to continue to promote the self-care sector?

As mentioned above, the health authorities are preparing a royal decree to update the legislation on advertising. Overall, it is very important to have all the stakeholders on board – especially doctors. It is crucial to have doctors on board so that they can prescribe selfcare medicines in the electronic prescription. The Electronic Medical Prescription solves several problems that have plagued the traditional paper-based system. It avoids doctors' and pharmacists' errors when transcribing or decoding names or dosages of drugs. However, as prescriptions are recorded by the health service of each autonomous region and shared with the pharmacist association, at the moment we only have six out of the 17 regions that have included OTC products. Nurses are equally important – in Spain we have 250,000 nurses, which means they have great power when it comes to recommend self-care. It is fundamental that the citizens and the consumers identifies in the OTC segment a solution, that they can obtain the information they need, and we need to make an effort as a sector to make this happen.

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How have these advertising campaigns changed the mentality of the Spanish towards self-care?

In the past, Spain used to be a doctors-driven country and self-care was not contemplated. To a certain extent, advertising campaigns do educate consumers. I believe that people acquire safety habits and advertising strongly contributes to creating such awareness, however I also reckon that there is room for improvement. Young people, for instance, are still unaware as to the basics of healthcare, which means that we need to disseminate knowledge in a more thought-out manner – for instance in schools. Another challenge is raising awareness among people with chronic diseases who use self-care products.

The illegal sale of medicinal products via the Internet is a serious threat to public health and the EU has introduced a common logo to fight counterfeit drugs. What is Spanish legislation like in the field of online sales of medicines?

Generally speaking, e-commerce for OTC drugs is very well regulated here in Spain. Here, we do not have an issue of counterfeit drugs as such, a bigger challenge is by all means parallel trade which may result in shortages of medicines.

How do you see the future of ANEFP and the self-care segment in general?

I must confess that in the field of OTC Spain is still an emerging market, as there is room for penetration for the consumer. I see the consumer becoming more and more demanding in terms of products, innovation and value for money they are going to spend. Ultimately, people need self-care and so does the country because only through an increasing uptake of self-care the healthcare system is going to be able to increase savings and have the funds that allow the Ministry of Health to finance prescription and personalized medicines. In Spain, most of the self-desk categories are prescription-based, whereas in most other countries it is not. I believe the sector has a promising potential to grow.

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