Interview: Laura McMullin – General Manager UK & Ireland, Pierre Fabre



"Our strong heritage and our future products will help to build a solid foundation for Pierre Fabre to become an industry leading partner for healthcare professionals."

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Laura McMullin, General Manager of the pharmaceutical division of Pierre Fabre in the UK and Ireland, explains the huge untapped potential of the organisation and her intention to make the affiliate the best performing in the coming years. She also details the strong heritage of Oncology and the affiliate's exciting future.

Laura, you joined Pierre Fabre just a few months ago in April. What attracted you to Pierre Fabre and what were your first impressions joining the third largest French pharmaceutical group?

Becoming a UK General Manager has always been a strong desire and aspiration for me. I had spent nearly 20 with years with Big Pharma in a variety of commercial and marketing roles, and I felt that taking a General Manager position was a natural career evolution. In Pierre Fabre, the philosophy of approaching health and beauty in a holistic way is completely different from anything I have been part of before.

Having a family member who is experiencing health issues, or experiencing them yourself, makes you realise how vulnerable the patient is and how dependent they are on pharmaceutical companies to make sure medicines are accessible. Providing high quality information to healthcare professionals is crucial so they feel confident in prescribing the best products in the right way to patients.

The UK is still a relatively new market for Pierre Fabre but it has huge untapped potential. The organisation is currently undergoing significant transformation; with a new global CEO Eric Ducournau (formerly heading Pierre Fabre Dermo-Cosmetics), and expanding its international focus under the leadership of Frederic Duchesne, the Pierre Fabre Pharmaceuticals CEO. This makes it a really exciting time to join and have a chance to shape the UK culture. In Pierre Fabre, the culture is very supportive, decision-making is fast and this is a very energising environment to work within.

What is the scope of operations of Pierre Fabre in the UK?

The pharmaceutical and dermo-cosmetics businesses are led separately in the UK, with two different general managers. As a whole, Pierre Fabre's UK/Ireland team amounts to around 100 employees.

On the pharmaceutical side for which I am responsible, we have a very strong heritage in oncology, stem cell transplantation and in the urology field.

The focus of the company is to be a significant player in the oncology field, and I believe we can greatly capitalize on our strong heritage.

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Can you tell us more about the performance of the UK affiliate and your main objectives?

The UK affiliate is a small part of the business for the Pierre Fabre group, today representing less than 5% of international sales. Usually when looking at big pharma companies, the UK ranks in the top five of European affiliates; there is absolutely no reason why Pierre Fabre UK should not have that same vision and aspiration to grow and expand.

From an internal perspective and as the manager of the UK & Ireland affiliate, my vision is to build a top performing team proudly providing best in class treatment options to patients.

Pierre Fabre himself was a pharmacist, and several of your counterparts in other countries have told us about the privileged connection between the company and practitioners and pharmacists. How do you work with the medical community and the NHS in the UK to make sure patients have access to your innovative solutions?

Pharmaceutical companies have to be realistic in terms of what the NHS is facing as they bring new medicines into the healthcare system. Oncology has always been a very challenging area in terms

of funding, but if a company truly believes in ensuring broad patient access to products, then working closely with and partnering with the NHS is the only way to ensure patients will get the treatments they need.

How would you describe Pierre Fabre's reputation towards the medical community and the NHS?

In the UK Pierre Fabre is still relatively unknown as it is a very new organisation and most of the medical community is not sufficiently aware of our products. A lot of work has to be done to show what the company stands for and to demonstrate our values. Our strong heritage and our future products will help to build a solid foundation for Pierre Fabre to become an industry leading partner for healthcare professionals.

In his meeting with us, Frederic Duchesne, CEO of Pierre Fabre Pharmaceuticals' division, told us about the importance partnerships hold for Pierre Fabre, and indeed, your company signed agreements with Allergan, Pfizer, Menarini and Recordati to name but a few. What role can the UK play as a market to scout for new partnerships?

There is definitely room to extend partnership working in the UK context. Our collaboration with Pfizer has proven that Pierre Fabre can help to drive growth for brands that are perhaps a lower business priority for the MA holder but which still have great sales opportunity across Europe. As the UK affiliate grows and moves forward in launching new products and developing the pipeline, we will certainly be open to more partnership options and the UK could be a great potential partner.

What do you see as your main challenges ahead?

The main challenge for the organisation today is to have the right culture in place ready for our future. It is crucial that everyone has the right vision of what the UK affiliate stands for and what we are trying to achieve. Like any organisation, we need frameworks and processes so that everyone is clear on standards and expectations, this will then make it easier for the team to work efficiently and effectively.

Can you tell us more about Pierre Fabre's governance?

The Pierre Fabre Group has a unique shareholding structure that guarantees its continuity and independence, in line with the values of its founder. The substantial-majority shareholder is the Pierre Fabre Foundation, a government-recognized public-interest organization. Employees form the second largest group of shareholders through a buoyant employee stock ownership plan. This

structure is unique in France and is aimed at ensuring the long-term stability of the company's. The Pierre Fabre Foundation aims at improving access to quality drugs and healthcare in Southeast Asia and Africa. The Foundation is running 32 programs in 15 countries directly supporting local stakeholders, health care facilities and universities. Knowing that your work ultimately benefits to populations in need is a great reward.

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What are the main objectives for the UK affiliate looking at the coming years?

The main objective is to build a team of high performers so we can ensure patients have access to the best treatment options available.

As we develop our medicines and our pipeline our affiliate will continue to expand in size and potential. And once we have truly embedded the required standards of compliance and ethics, we will be keen to work with additional partners to further expand our portfolio. Finally, we need to ensure that UK patients continue to gain access, at the same time as other patients in Europe, to new therapies for conditions such as cancer, to continue the drive to improve outcomes for patients

What would be your final message to our international readers?

The UK is still an amazing place to invest but we need to find ways of making it easier to operate here. The UK is sometimes seen as a challenging environment in which to do business but many of the perceived constraints simply relate to understanding how to operate in an ethical way, as defined by the ABPI Code of Practice. Rather than being seen as negative, they just need to be understood as enablers to help organisations to be credible and compliant. It is an exciting country to work with top international thought-leaders and incredible science. However, it is critical that with Brexit and its associated changes, we ensure the UK patient continues to gain access, at the same time as other patients in Europe, to new therapies for conditions such as cancer, to continue the drive to improve outcomes for patients.

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