Yann Gaslain – CEO, Procare Health, Spain



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Yann Gaslain, CEO of Procare Health, a local player dedicated to innovative natural women's health products, outlines his strategy to set up the company since 2012 and gives an overview of his company's star product, Papilocare. Furthermore, he points out the company's internationalisation and R&D strategy and highlights the importance of clinical evidence in creating constructive discussion around natural products.

What was the motivation to set up the company in 2012?

I always had the idea in the back of my mind to set up my own business. But with this thought, I was always asking myself the question of what I will do and how will I get there. The amazing thing about the company is we set it up in 2012, a time in which Spain was at one of its lowest points economically.

My journey in Spain started in 2004 when Procter and Gamble brought me here to help set up the pharmaceutical business. We did this by purchasing a local Spanish company and successfully implemented our culture and strategies. At a global level, the company then sold the pharmaceutical arm in 2009 to Warner Chilcott, though they had a buy-sell mentality and made a good profit selling the business to Actavis a few years later.

Just before the sale I was offered a management and buy offer for part of the business and made an offer. This was rejected, which seemed disappointing at the time, though looking back it was a

good thing. With this business model I would have had a smaller share of the company, but now with Procare Health, I have a 100 percent share and control all operations.

Prior to founding Procare Health, I already had 20 years' experience in women´s health and had witnessed, due to a large epidemiological study in 2006, that there had been a negative perception placed on hormones, attributing them to an increased risk of diseases, such as cancer and cardiovascular. When setting up Procare Health I believed this had to be addressed and decided to focus on areas with no or little treatment using natural products. For the last 40 years pharmaceuticals had been chemically synthesized using organic chemistry, but if you look at the medicines for centuries, treatments had been done using traditional natural products. Our focus was to use these natural qualities available to us and find women's health solutions.

What is the company's star product?

Papilocare. The HPV virus is the leading cause of cervical cancer in woman. Currently, a vaccine exists for the prevention of the disease, though there was no treatment until Papilocare if a woman already had it. In the past, a doctor would tell the patient he would monitor the HPV condition, though when the woman read more into it, they were under the impression there was no cure and they would get cancer. Using biotechnology and natural products we have now developed the only product that helps women manage HPV, which not only helps with condition but manages their stress of the incorrect belief they are going to have cancer in the future.

How was 2018 for the company?

We reached our target of ten million EUR in annual revenues, doubling the sales and profit from 2017. The plan is to reach 15 million EUR in sales by the end of 2019.

What is driving this growth?

Everything is linked to innovation and gaining a larger market share by releasing new products and addressing new needs. Sales will grow both domestically and internationally, and we have set up legal entities in France and Portugal and are looking for partnerships and distributors in other markets. For example, we have an agreement with Shionogi in Italy for Papilocare and Libicare, Gedeon Richter in eastern Europe and Besins Healthcare for Latin America. The current sales are

split 40 percent between Spain and 60 percent internationally.

What steps are needed to enter the US?

It is a lot about the legal approach and working with the FDA. We are speaking with our legal partners there and setting up meetings, it is a complex process. If the FDA meetings are positive, we will set up a legal US entity and look to possibly partner with a local distributor there. China is completely different, and we will be looking for potential partnerships to enter that market.

Overall for any agreement, we set up it is about finding the ideal partner that has capable woman´s health experience. Our products are very much driven by prescriptions and recommendations, despite being considered consumer healthcare. Therefore, it is important to establish the brand through key opinion leader and have the relevant guidelines in place for physicians prescribing the products.

The company dedicates some 15 percent of revenues into R&D. Are there any current projects you are working on?

We have set up a fantastic program with the California Nanosystem Institute of the University of UCLA for the development of an innovative Cervix on a chip, a technology they have developed for other organs. This will allow us to reproduce a cervix in which to introduce culture cells to have a living model. We will then be able to conduct experiments on real tissue, rather than the traditional model via animals or plates. In turn, results will be more accurate and allow us to measure the side-effects in real time, as a preliminary step to expensive but necessary clinical programs. We have sent a leading researcher of ours to co-develop the system due to our expert knowledge on the HPV virus.

Are any of your products being currently reimbursed?

We are constantly conducting research to further validate our products, and possibly with more results, we will eventually have reimbursement. Furthermore, we are always seeking ways to decrease spending in the manufacturing process, so the end consumer will pay less for the medicine.

However, there may be a possibility in the future of having a collaboration with private insurance. Any product, like Papilocare, that can prevent medical complications down the line and save insurer money will be considered, and maybe this can be done through systems such as co-payment.

What is the brand perception you are looking to build?

Our signature is naturally woman, and I want this to be part of the majority of things we do. This is about providing efficient and safe medicines that are defined by naturality.

As aforementioned, for decades clinical evidence has provided physicians with the relevant information for understanding the action and results of a drug, through concepts such as placebo, double-blind testing etc. At Procare health, we are bringing these clinical research methods developed in the classical pharmaceutical industry for the first time to natural products that have never been tested. We now ask for key opinion leaders to be open to the data, and we are open to discussing the information in a constructive manner. The issue is many of them still see the idea of natural products is clinically proven to be a foreign concept, and now we must work with them to open their minds to this idea by providing them with our clinical evidence.

What is the two to three-year plan for the company?

To reach 50 million EUR in annual revenue, and we can assume this on a 5-year basis. This will be built around not just greater internationalization, but a pipeline with innovation as the cornerstone and this will only become more prominent in the future as our capacity to invest into R&D grows.

What has been your proudest moment?

Papilocare. For once in my life, I am providing a solution for women that was not available in the past. This is the most important thing I have done in my professional career and my vision is to continue this goal in providing to women in need.

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