

Eduardo Barriga - General Manager, Boiron Spain



There is, in fact, a future for homeopathy in Spain and Europe. There are many reasons but the most important being the patient need for portfolios that are not as aggressive as other products

21.01.2019

Tags: [Spain](#), [Homeopathy](#), [Boiron](#), [Natural Medicine](#)

Eduardo Barriga, general manager of Boiron, the homeopathic market leader in Spain, discusses the company's approach to the Spanish market since he took the position two years ago. Furthermore, Barriga explains how despite criticism, Spain is a strong market for the company and how he plans to transform the mindset of health stakeholders to be more open minded towards homeopathy.

What was your objective when taking on the role as general manager two years ago?

My aim was to come back to my home country and take a fresh look at business in Spain. Instead of taking the traditional path of requiring someone from Spain, Boiron was looking to bring on someone with an outside perspective.

Since then, over the past two years, Boiron has gone through portfolio changes in addition to company changes which have put us in much better shape than we were beforehand; something that was one of my initial objectives. I began by getting a clear idea of the country, including what are the market trends in the medical and pharmaceutical area. The next step was to get a clear diagnosis of the company and its positioning.

I saw that there is, in fact, a future for homeopathy in Spain and Europe. There are many reasons but the most important being the patient need for portfolios that are not as aggressive as other products. Many customers are in search for different, more natural and safe solutions for their

health. Additionally, the population is aging and soon Spain will be one of the oldest countries in the world. This creates challenges in the industry and puts pressure on the conventional solutions.

How has the portfolio evolved and where does it sit today?

We have concentrated our portfolio into a narrower focus which is more in line with the local pathologies in Spain and this brings overall stronger value. Additionally, we made an important change in understanding our target in terms of professionals; that is, doctors of patients for whom our treatments can be most beneficial and what is the right way to approach them. We want to build closer connections with both modern pharmacies and physicians with a new medical approach, more global and integrative, who advise and are more interactive with their patients. This has changed our strategies in approaching health providers, our regional focuses, and consequently the priorities of our commercial teams.

As a sector leader, is homeopathy still Boiron's focus in a market like Spain?

Absolutely. Homeopathy is our main focus in Spain, Europe, and the rest of the world. The affiliate is the third or fourth largest in Europe, and looking forward, has the most growth potential in the region. We expect moderate growth as we approach new physicians and consumers in the right way.

How are homeopathic therapies perceived in Spain?

From my point of view, there is a heavy criticism in Spain which is undeserved. Spain is a market where the homeopathic regulations were not aligned with that of the European Union and it is heading in the direction of being regulated in the same way. As the market leader, we want to be regulated in the spirit of the European laws.

The criticism we see against homeopathy is against the social reality as more and more patients are interested in the solutions we have to offer. Likewise, the criticism goes against the professional reality being that physicians are increasingly interested in understanding the benefits this kind of therapy can bring to patients. We are dedicated to continually providing more evidence in its effectiveness. Even legally, homeopathy is recognized by the European Union. Against all of these factors, we know the negative perceptions will soon come to an end.

How is Boiron working to change the mentality of stakeholders in Spain?

We respond to the criticisms with logic and accurate information we can offer. At the moment, I do not see an unprejudiced willingness to discuss the facts from throughout the health industry. However, patient, doctor, and pharmacy associates are approaching Boiron with slight skepticism, but also interest and an unbiased mind.

We are very pleased to engage in this interaction because at the end of the day the crucial factor is the ability to choose. We have to be able to explain with facts the add value that homeopathy means to their daily practice as an additional and useful option. Controversy is always welcome as long as it is open-minded.

What perception do you want Boiron to have within the Spain health paradigm?

We want to be recognized as a pharmaceutical laboratory that undergoes the same control that is mandatory for the health industry. We are obliged under the same regulations as the rest of Europe, so quality is important to us. We have been working on this for 80 years. Finally, we want people to understand the benefits of a more natural and safe solution.

What potential for homeopathy exists in Spain for the future?

With the current trends of interest in Spain, if we can apply what has been done successfully in markets where homeopathy is valued, like France, the dynamics here can reach the same level within the next five years. As market leaders, we invest heavily in the development of the homeopathy category and in doing so we will build up ourselves.

How do you build a network across Spain's vast number of pharmacies?

We work directly with 5,000 specific pharmacies who are positioning themselves to become, what I believe, will be the pharmacy model of the future. These pharmacies have a greater dedication to patients by offering advice and are open to new, natural therapies. For the last five years, natural therapies have been growing in Spain and Europe by double-digit figures.

We approach these pharmacies to develop a long-standing partnership rather than a simple inventory provider. Boiron has doubled the sales force to address the business operations but also conducts training in all pathologies. Education is the driving force for all stakeholders involved in the process.

What is your vision for Boiron in the next five years?

My ambition is to establish a sustainable, continuous growth in the future. Furthermore, we want to solidify the structure of selling and training while at the same time forming partnerships. We want to capture the new generation of physicians.

Boiron's medicines are backed by evidence and have a strong presence in pharmacies, somewhere we will be staying for the long run. There are not many natural product producers that can say the same. Our aim is to be a complete solution for the pharmacies for healthcare.

What final message would you like to deliver?

To those health stakeholders who are already benefiting from homeopathic medicines; continue to do so. To those who have yet to consider the added value of homeopathy in their medical offerings; open your mind, your patients are looking for these new health solutions.

[See more interviews](#)