

Mauricio Guizar - General Manager, Ipsen Mexico



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08.04.2020

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Mauricio Guizar, newly appointed general manager of Ipsen Mexico since October 2019, shares his first impression of the French specialty care player's operations in Mexico, the significance of being the first Mexican GM in the local market, as well as his focus on positioning Ipsen as a partner to the Mexican government and other public healthcare stakeholders.

Mauricio, having joined Ipsen Mexico as GM in October 2019, what are your first impressions of the company?

I am very impressed with Ipsen. Ipsen is organized like a biotech company rather than a midsize pharma company, which means that our culture focuses on innovation. There is a 'fail fast, succeed fast' culture that encourages people to experiment and be creative but also adapt quickly to changes, which is very exciting. The office environment is modern in terms of technology, remote working policies, and there are enough open spaces for collaboration and meetings in the office. In addition, Ipsen Mexico had also been recognized by CETIFARMA (*Consejo de Ética y Transparencia de la Industria Farmacéutica en México*) for our culture of ethics and compliance.

I am also proud that I am the first Mexican GM for Ipsen Mexico. This is a recognition and shows that Ipsen globally is moving to a multinational approach, as can be seen in the establishment of three global corporate offices in Cambridge, US; UK; and Paris, France, as part of our international strategy.

What are your strategic priorities as the new GM?

The transformation of Ipsen Mexico is the first priority. In addition, we are focused on the launch of new products as well as generating more access to our existing products on the market. Ipsen focuses on three therapeutic areas: neurology, oncology and rare diseases, all of which are significant needs in Mexico. Being able to introduce new products and expand the reach of our existing portfolio is therefore extremely important.

Ipsen is excited to launch a new and innovative drug for renal cancer soon, which had been approved in December 2019 by COFEPRIS. This is one of the most innovative oncology products globally so we are eager to deliver it to patients soon. For neurology, we have a product on the market with a long history but the current task is to improve the level of treatment and increase patient access. Around rare diseases, we have products in the process of registration.

Secondly, we want to become the best specialty care company in terms of talent. It is not just about the size of the company. As a company with a biotech mindset, as I mentioned, our focus is not on our size but rather the way we work. The Ipsen Mexico team is characterized by passion, curiosity, collaboration and market knowledge.

As a result of being a Specialty Care company, we have a strong experience in the public market. Therefore, a third priority is to continue working extremely close with the government to ensure that we can help raise the level of treatments for patients of different therapeutic areas in Mexico. With the change of government, I believe that many doors will be open to challenge the status quo and bring innovation. This level can be improved if all stakeholders in the system start look to increase patient access and innovation instead of focusing exclusively on prices. We have to understand that the government is currently evaluating the former system in order to improve it. They are listening, not only to the industry but also patients, hospitals and physicians, which opens the door to new opportunities to define a new and improved system. At Ipsen, we are open to adapting and bringing significant improvements in order to support the new healthcare system.

How does Ipsen plan to continue building your relationships with the overall healthcare ecosystem in Mexico?

First of all, we recognize that our ways of working cannot focus only on commercial aspects. If we are to do our part as pharmaceutical companies, we must also invest in activities that promote

disease awareness as well as medical education. This means working with the government in different ways: obviously bringing innovation to Mexico but also working with them to find better models of reimbursement and access. It is not enough to just submit our medical dossiers, we also have to show that we can deliver products that are cost-efficient for the system. We need to understand the perspective of public payers. If I have an expensive product with poor efficacy, I cannot expect to receive approval in a country like Mexico where healthcare resources are constrained. We have to be smarter in terms of submitting solutions and proposals that are attractive to the public system because they demonstrate clear outcomes.

In addition, since my arrival, we are participating more actively in initiatives with the National Health Council (*Consejo de Salubridad General (CSG)*) and Funsalud (*Fundación Mexicana para la Salud*) such as Funsalud's initiative to create a National Rare Diseases Registry for Mexico. All these activities are very important because we want Ipsen to become relevant within the healthcare sector in Mexico. Most of our products are not consumer products so we are not well-known by the general public. This means that we have to work to make our voices heard and our presence felt. We participate in several forums and conferences on different disease areas and health policies. We partner with the French embassy in Mexico to help promote more investment in Mexico. In this sense, having a local management is extremely helpful because having a deeper understanding of local context is key to represent Ipsen Mexico better amongst the public stakeholders.

Ipsen as a company also has a strong history of partnerships and here in Mexico we are working with two other companies, Galderma and Mayoly Spindler, for other products in our global portfolio. Galderma manages the aesthetics indications for our Dysport® product while we retain the therapeutic market for cerebral palsy and spasticity. This is extremely complementary because they have a strong coverage of the aesthetic market, and in terms of compliance, it guarantees that there is no mix of indications in the usage of this product. This is extremely important for physicians and patients. Mayoly Spindler takes care of our gastrointestinal portfolio, and we will continue working with them to bring in more GI products.

With your focus on specialty care, how difficult is it to build a competent specialty care team in Mexico?

I have worked in specialty care for several years and it is very different from traditional pharma. Specialty Care requires a different approach; it is not the typical brand promotion and product

messages, it is about understanding the needs of the physicians and having a more scientific and medical orientation. It is also crucial that the team understands all the processes and regulations necessary for the patients to receive access to the product. Specially for rare diseases, diagnosis is a big challenge so our team has to understand the entire patient journey, including aspects like who are the physicians able to provide such diagnoses and which physicians will be able to treat a patient with such conditions. It is challenging because specialty care requires a very specialized salesforce with specific competences.

When I joined Ipsen Mexico, the affiliate already had a strong specialty care competences but we do have to continue to build our capabilities here. This means developing our team and bringing experienced people, as well as providing scientific and clinical training, so that our salesforce understands the patient journey as well as scientific aspects of our products.

Globally, what is the relevance of Mexico for Ipsen as a company?

Ipsen Mexico and Brazil are the only two markets with direct presence in Latin America. The other countries are managed through different commercial partnerships through our export LATAM offices. This shows the importance of the Mexican market to Ipsen globally. In addition, we are also very relevant in terms of clinical research. We currently have three clinical studies - one for oncology and two for neuroscience - involving Mexican patients.

In addition, Ipsen has maintained a great reputation as a specialty care player in Mexico with a strong image of ethics and compliance amongst physicians and medical practitioners, as have been recognized by CETIFARMA, as I mentioned.

In addition, we have also been recognized as a Great Place To Work. We have around 50 people in the affiliate now and we try very hard to promote a good and positive working environment. The biotech mindset at Ipsen promotes a more flexible and creative culture. While people working for Ipsen Mexico may not have the option of choosing from many different positions and roles, they do have the option of managing different processes, responsibilities and projects from their current position. This gives them more autonomy over their jobs as well. The other aspect is that the company culture focuses less on presentations and meetings and more on engaging with the market and working on projects that truly impact patients' lives. I really like this culture in biotech companies where everything can be challenged as long as a better solution or alternative can be proposed! As the GM, I also try to remain extremely accessible to my team so that there is a sense of collaboration and teamwork in the whole office.

In terms of corporate social responsibility, Ipsen is also very active here, globally and in Mexico. For instance, we have switched our vehicle fleet to hybrid and electric cars. We also banned the use of plastic water bottles and reduced the number of trash cans in our office to encourage our employees to recycle. For our meetings, we also try to use suppliers that source their products in an environmentally-friendly way, and globally we have some examples of meetings with limited or zero carbon footprint. We also contribute to our neighborhood by volunteering at different schools around our office in Mexico City.

Looking forward, what is your vision for Ipsen Mexico in three years?

The first and most important aspect is to make Ipsen more relevant to the Mexican market by bringing the best products and developing the best specialty care team. As an innovative company, we want to be an example. We also want to develop Mexico as a talent cluster and export skilled and experienced people to other countries.

We also want to increase access to our products. Mexico is a very fragmented market so the levels of treatment are not always at the level that the patients need, so we want to continue to be recognized as a partner for the government and public payers in promoting better access to innovative and effective therapies for patients in Mexico.

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