

Federico Chinni, Managing Director- UCB Italy



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UCB Italy's Managing Director, Federico Chinni offers his insights into UCB's positioning and its new product launches, the first for the company in ten years. He also weighs in on Italy's national Recovery and Resilience Plan and explains how the company was ready for digitalisation even before the pandemic.

Having worked mainly for American companies, what made you take the leap to a European firm like UCB?

I started my journey here at UCB in mid-2018. I was delighted to take on this role in what is a great company focused on creating value for patients. UCB is really committed to the people that are living with severe diseases, as well as their caregivers and families, for the purpose of helping them to live their best lives.

As a company, we are continuously innovating in order to bring differentiated solutions with unique outcomes onto the market. Therefore, I found this message of helping people to have the best individual experience very interesting and important, which pushed me to join and embrace this new adventure.

Can you tell us about UCB's positioning on the Italian market? Has it changed since you first arrived?

We have changed together as a team, UCB and myself. Now we are more communicative internally and we launch more products externally, positioning us as front runners in this regard. Obviously with growth comes challenges and it is part of every company's journey, therefore, better communications were essential for us to evolve, not only for our team but also for the communities, the patients and everyone involved.

I can say now that we, as a company, are very proactive in the way we communicate things and interact with the people in our environment. This change can be seen in two particular areas: talent attraction and external stakeholders. In terms of talent attraction, we grew from less than 100 people in January 2020 to 140 currently. We hired a lot of people during the pandemic, and in order to attract them and work seamlessly with them, clear communication was key.

The second area was external stakeholders, with whom we sought more interaction both with and between. We called this process, "connecting healthcare", which brings patients, citizens, physicians, agents in the private sector and many other groups together to solve specific issues. In a way with this type of closer communication, we wanted to break the silos and I think we have been successful at it. We took and made this conciliatory role our own as it helps us get to our goals, and because it is also a good way to catch talent for our company.

Your reports show that 2020 was a good year for UCB, what are you expecting for 2022?

2020 was a very good year, as was 2021. Last year, revenues grew three percent more than the previous year. Our expectations for 2022 are mainly related to the launches of our products, including a drug for epilepsy and another for psoriasis; it is a year of great possibilities. We had not launched products in over ten years, and now we have several successful launches.

We are focused on understanding the field, what we want to say, what are we trying to solve, and with whom we can collaborate to make the process move forward. We want to understand to get early engagement. We want things to go smoothly, but not all regions get the green light at the same time, so focus on each journey the best we can. The data we gather is what makes us better.

Other Italian pharma company representatives have mentioned the National Plan for Recovery and Resilience as being overly focused on infrastructure. What are your views and thoughts on this issue?

The largest amount of money within the Plan is dedicated to the ecological or green transition; there is also money allocated to infrastructure as you mentioned, but out of the whole budget, there is EUR 20 billion set aside to reach key objectives within the healthcare system. One of the objectives is to make home care available for chronic patients, so hospitals have enough beds for other patients and people with chronic diseases can receive their treatment as comfortably as possible. Another healthcare objective is to digitalise health records to move to a data-based healthcare system. Even though this process has been very successful so far, there is still a lot to be done; many regions must catch up and the communication between the private and public sectors has to flow better. Therefore, the plan goes beyond infrastructure, a lot has to do with technology as well.

Digitalisation for UCB could be a great opportunity in terms of capabilities; we could make sure that for all these changes there are capable and well-trained professionals that can help reach these goals, because both objectives that I mentioned before could be intertwined and we have to be ready for it. This also goes for patients and is why we need somebody that communicates this to

everybody and leads the change.

I think we can be this connection because internally we have gone through this process ourselves. When I started at UCB back in 2018, I rescued a digitalisation project, as I am very passionate about technology, in which all interactions with physicians were through a camera and not face to face. We had to preach internally what the changes were and why they should be embraced by all. We tried to do everything remotely, even interviews! Then the pandemic happened and we were able to perform quality interactions and we got bigger and better at it because people were already trained to be in front of a camera and used the right materials. We also learned that face to face e interactions lasted a couple of minutes, while online ones lasted around 39 minutes, meaning you could get more attention and information in this kind of setting. Getting this sort of insight is what will help telemedicine move forward and be more than a physician in front of a camera, it will hopefully allow the public healthcare system to find newer and better ways to connect to its different stakeholders.

For all of it to succeed, it is fundamental to know and understand the patient's journey, close the digital gap in terms of infrastructures and capabilities, also customise solutions for different specialities.

Do you have a particular message you would like to share with your colleagues across the world?

The main message should be that connecting healthcare is very important, as it will help the system to advance and close the gap, break the silos and act together with a common action plan. That is what is important and is in the DNA of UCB

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