# Interview: Hubert Niemyjski â?? Country Manager Poland and the Baltics, Coloplast

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*Hubert Niemyjski, country manager of Coloplast Poland and the Baltics, highlights the large differences between the market landscape of the companyâ??s three pillars; ostomy, wound and continence care. Additionally, he discusses the importance of taking into consideration QOL when making reimbursement decisions and the amazing potential of the Polish market for Coloplast if a more holistic approach is taken.*

**How has the transition been coming from the world of pharmaceuticals to medical devices?**

It has been very smooth, and I have noticed that both sides of the healthcare business are quite different. Both are well regulated, but medical devices considerably less, which allows for a lot more opportunities. The most significant difference is that medical device processes create a shorter period of time from idea to implementation, so the market is more dynamic and promotes creativity.

At Coloplast Poland, in the last two years we have witnessed steady growth in the three pillar areas of the company: ostomy, wound and continence care. At roughly seven to nine percent annual growth, outperforming the market by around three times in the same time period.

**The company opened a global shared service centre in Szczecin. What are the operations coming from that site?**

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The role of the Szczecin shared service centre is to support international markets in the areas of finance, customer care and IT, as well as a few other activities.

**On that note, what is the strategic importance of Poland in the region?**

From an EU perspective we still lag behind the big five nations; Spain, Italy, Germany, France and the UK, as well as the Netherlands. Poland is still segmented within the class of emerging markets, though this group of nations is very important for the company to grow.

**You mentioned the three main pillars of care: ostomy, wound and continence care. How are these areas portrayed within the Polish healthcare landscape?**

The landscape is extremely different within each distinct area. Ostomy car is pretty well developed in Poland, and though we still lag behind western Europe and neighboring countries, the distance between us is minimal. The current reimbursement conditions give Polish patients access to the newest ostomy technologies for a limited period or older technologies for a longer duration.

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In wound care it is a completely different story, and Poland lags well behind the rest of Europe. Reimbursement stipulations class wound care products the same as pharmaceuticals; therefore, we must negotiate for each product based on a recommended price, so we are always pressured to offer lower and lower prices. This creates an unfavorable commercial environment from HQÂ´s perspective as profit is a concern.

The worst situation is for continence care, but more specifically, catheters. Polish patients, such as those with spina bifida or neurogenic bladder, very limited access to products that allow them to live with dignity. They must use extremely outdated non-coated hydrophilic catheters that are low quality and cause a lot of infections and other side effects: Looking ahead, there is limited prospects for this to change â?? although â?? for urine bags the market conditions are similar to ostomy care, so patients live at an acceptable level to cope with their condition.

**What steps do you believe the government must take to make continence care a priority in the future?**

The government needs to have a more holistic approach. Thus far, decision makers are just looking at the initial price of the product, and the departments formulating the reimbursement decision do not take in account the additional costs, such as antibiotic treatment and hospitalisation.

Without the integrated, full picture approach, the situation will not improve for patients. From our experience in other markets, it makes sense to spend money in the short term for long-term savings. Utilizing user friendly and technologically advanced catheters is a lot more cost-effective than waiting until a patient has a costly urology tract infection. Hopefully, this pharmacoeconomic approach is a priority, and the current Ministry of Health (MOH) is discussing this in more depth.

**One of the key benefits of your product is improved Quality of Life (QOL). How open is the MOH to taking QOL into consideration when making decisions?**

So far, QOL has not been a topic, and whenever we have attempted to put QOL on the table, the response is that Poland is not on the same level as other nations and we are more focused on saving lives, rather than solely improving a patients QOL.

Of course, QOL is a direction Poland needs to adopt, especially considering the social costs that should be taken into consideration. Many patients that hold certain conditions cannot properly function in society and the burden of supporting these people is higher than helping them live independently.

**How is Coloplast interacting itself with the patient and medical community to be the partner of choice?**

We provide an array of services for patients and medical personnel, especially nurses. Nurses education is a priority as they will improve the overall care of affected Poles and this is our major focus.

For patients, we want to be viewed as a company that takes care of our patientâ??s QOL and is a n organization they can always rely on. Patients have round the clock access to information online or can call and discuss any issues. Our consumer care department operators will then attempt to solve their issues or direct the patient towards a nurse if it is deemed a clinical problem.

**Poland for many companies is seen as a key market. Looking ahead, what do you see as the potential of the Polish market for Coloplast?**

It is huge! Within ostomy care, as aforementioned, the market is already quite developed, and Poland is strong within the emerging markets, with the industry valued at around 35 million USD and projected to grow at around four percent a year.

Although, within the field of continence care the market space is enormous, and with a change in the nationÂ´s reimbursement approach, we expect triple digit growth quickly, as there only exists around five percent market penetration.

**What is your final message towards the key decision makers, so they have a more holistic approach to healthcare?**

The time is ripe to take a big step forward. We are one of the last countries not just in the EU, but the entire Europe, to not have hydrophilic catheters reimbursed. By changing this and having a broader approach, the current government will allow patients to have an improved QOL and live in dignity. In-turn, this short -term spending will bring about significant savings in the long-run for the entire healthcare system.

**Where do you want to take Coloplast in the next three years?**

As aforementioned, we hope to see a change to the mindset around patient access to hydrophilic catheters sooner rather than later. Coloplast Poland is ready to supply patients with the most advanced technologies and produce the same services as other markets.

**What would be your advice to other professionals starting their career in the world of healthcare?**

The most important thing are passion and constant improvement. There is always room to get better, and as a professional you must be ready to make the moves to fill this space.

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