

Interview: MichaÅ? Mieszkowski â?? General Manager, Angelini Poland



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MichaÅ? Mieszkowski, general manager of Angelini Poland, discusses the strategic significance of Poland for the company, as the third largest affiliate within the global company, the companyâ??s impressive product portfolio and exciting pipeline, new therapeutic areas, and his future aspirations for Angelini Poland.

As the general manager for Poland at Angelini, could you introduce the Polish operations to our international audience?

Angelini Poland is a mid-sized entity that employs around 200 staff members and operates in sales, marketing and distribution. In addition to our own products, we are also the partner of choice for companies wishing to enter the Polish market. This business represents 30 percent of our revenues in Poland.

The affiliate throughout the years has experienced constant growth. We are always thinking in the long term and have balanced our portfolio around three pillars: Rx, OTC and speciality products, such as oncology and rare diseases.

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In the last few years, our Rx range has witnessed steady sales growth in psychiatry, and last year we became the market leader for anti-depressants with our top brand, TritticoÅ®, which entered the Polish market in 2003, though only in 2011 were we able to achieve reimbursement. Market access is an overriding challenge in the Polish healthcare ecosystem. Nevertheless, with the support of clinicians, we eventually managed to gain reimbursement for this product.

Our OTC portfolio is driven by our legacy product for sore throat, Tantum Verde®[®], and it has been on the Polish market since 1994. From 2009 it is the market leader in its class. This product's stable positioning, coupled with the double-digit growth of Trittico®[®], has established a stable base for Angelini Poland. Moreover, in 2010 we acquired locally six OTC brands. From this portfolio MagvitB6 and Visolvit are in our top ten, competing successfully with market leaders.

Additionally, we have a group of OTX products; meaning, treatments that were previously RX, and are now OTC. For example, anti-cough Levopront®[®], in its therapeutic class was the one of the market leader in doctors's recommendations, and in 2016 we switched it from Rx to OTC. This opened up the possibility to further promote in pharmacies and directly to the consumer; thus far, it has achieved double digit growth as well. In fact, a report done by IQVIA, demonstrated that this OTX decision was one of the most effective in Poland, a proud achievement for Angelini Poland.

How challenging is it to bring Angelini's products to the Polish market?

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This all depends on the type of product. For treatments like Levopront®[®], this was already registered in Poland; therefore, four months after Angelini signed an agreement with Domp®[®], it was on the Polish market. On the other hand, therapies like Iclusig®[®], a third line treatment for chronic and acute leukaemia, was first registered by the EMA in 2014, Angelini signed an agreement with ARIAD Pharmaceuticals in 2015, and still we do not have market access in Poland. This is due to the fact it is orphan drug and is fairly expensive; therefore, the national payer is unwilling to pay the high cost.

In fact, in 2012 with the introduction of the new reimbursement act, many treatments were delisted from the reimbursement list and it was extremely difficult at that time for innovative drugs to enter the market. Thus, many companies entered the food supplement and medical device sectors as market access is easier for these products. Today, the food supplement market, which was nearly non-existent in 2012, is as large as the OTC sector.

What is the strategic importance of Angelini Poland for the company?

Very important! We are the third largest nation for Angelini, only behind Italy and Spain, and there remains large room for growth. For example, the company launched this year in Italy a schizophrenia treatment, and Poland will be one of the next nation to start market access for this innovative product, hopefully before the end of Q2, 2018.

Nevertheless, the conundrum of receiving reimbursement again will be an issue. We believe that our strong market position in the psychiatry sector, will allow us to receive support from clinicians, and in-turn this will help in discussions with the government for additional funds for this widespread condition.

How is Angelini interacting throughout the healthcare market so Polish patients can access your treatments?

At Angelini Poland we develop close relationships with the medical community and clinicians, which enable us to get reimbursement and facilitate the access to our treatments for the Polish people.

Nevertheless, the medical community's support does not always guarantee the success of the application. For example, one of our haemo-oncology products has clear clinical evidence and clinicians's support, however, we have not gotten reimbursement yet.

The health technology assessment (HTA) process conducted by AOTMiT is extremely thorough and requires a comprehensive dossier to obtain a positive evaluation for market access approval. Innovative companies, despite showing a clear improvement in health outcomes, do find it challenging to get the product reimbursed, and in the end the patients pay the price as they are not receiving the treatment they require.

How do you position Angelini Poland as the partner of choice for the healthcare community, including government & industry moving forward?

We have always been a solid partner that constantly delivers results. We have many long-term partnerships with well renowned companies, such as Fidia Pharmaceuticals, Laboratories Expanscience, Helsinn, DompÅ© and Zambon.

It is imperative that we find a balance between our own Angelini treatments and licensed products, as they are driving our turnover growth. Angelini is focused on CNS and pain treatment and we cannot always depend on our R&D as it is not easy nowadays to develop new therapies. Furthermore, we see oncology and antibiotic treatments filling the area of largest need, and within these segments is where we seek new products and new partners.

What are your aspirations for Angelini Poland over the next three years?

If you look at IQVIA data it indicates we are a top-ten OTC company, and a top-50 Rx company. We will see the Rx segment growing once we obtain reimbursement for our haemo-oncology product. In OTC, growth is a bit harder as it generally requires a large investment. Nevertheless, we will introduce new Tantum VerdeÅ© variations to supplement our already strong market share in this area. Overall, we are looking at top-line healthcare, though we will balance this out with steady growth at the bottom line.

Having been working at Angelini for eight years now as general manager, what is the driving force that makes you tick, each and every day?

I have worked my way up at Angelini from day-one, from sales representative to general manager, and I love working here as Angelini has this unique and amazing company culture. I believe that I have a direct impact on people's lives, and each year at Angelini Poland we have achieved our objectives. Furthermore, we are extremely excited for the future as the company continues to grow and expand into new products and therapeutic areas.

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