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At UCB, we want to deliver the highest value to patients from diagnosis through to treatment, co-creating solutions with them

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Jesús Sobrino, area head

of UCB Iberia, and global leader for UCB's Patients Experience Program, discusses the significance of the affiliate, which makes up 15 percent of UCB's European sales, and their strategy to strengthen and grow their portfolio. Furthermore, he highlights the challenges of market access in the Spanish ecosystem, and how they overcome this, while truly placing the patient at the centre of everything they do.

What does patient-centricity mean for UCB Iberia?

UCB's ambition is to transform the lives of people living with chronic diseases helping them to manage their condition and improve their quality of life, Patients are at the centre of all we do.

Our company has adopted a structural and cultural transformation with a patient value mindset involving all levels of the organization. We have organized ourselves around the creation of patient value by providing multifunctional teams, and adopting the new principles of the patient-centred solutions model in our daily work

We can deliver lasting value only by better understanding the patient's complex journey with the disease and by deeply listening to their unmet needs, to improve their quality of life. We see patients as active contributors to co-create solutions, integrating their perspective from research to marketing, driving better solutions.

This new approach has changed the role of our relations with stakeholders and now we are all working together, collaborating with one another and focused on the value of the patient

As a pharmaceutical company, we fully believe it is our responsibility to deliver the highest patient value that helps patients achieve the best individual experience enabling them to live the life they choose.

At the national level, what other initiatives show how you are placing the patient in the centre of your operations?

In **epilepsy**, we started a program some years ago called "Vivir con Epilepsia (Living with Epilepsy)". This digital ecosystem (www.vivirconepilepsia.es) was established in Spain through a collaboration with scientific societies and patient organizations. With this initiative, we help and support patients worldwide on their journey with epilepsy, offering them resources to improve their quality of life and connecting them with other patients. Thus far it has assisted over 1 million people. Furthermore, in Spain, we have gone to 6000 schools and spoken to 120 thousand students and countless teachers to explain to them what epilepsy is and break down the stigma of the condition.

In the area of **Parkinson's disease**, UCB Iberia in collaboration with a patient organization "Curemos el Parkinson Foundation", launched the app #NeuroFit for patients, with the support of Atlético de Madrid Football Club Foundation. This was done with the aim of raising awareness about the importance of daily physical exercise for improving Parkinson's disease management and helping patients to carry it out.

In **Immunology**, we are making an enormous effort to improve the quality of life of women of

childbearing age affected by autoimmune diseases. Initiatives to improve their quality of life have focused on research, and studies which support the use of treatments during pregnancy and lactation: CRIB and CRADLE.

In addition, in collaboration with scientific societies, information materials, training programs for health professionals and different communication campaigns have been created to improve the information that reaches these women regarding family planning.

In this way, we launched an important program: “**#Hoysípuedo (Today, I can)**”. In this initiative, we have been working with several patient associations and scientific societies with the aim of supporting women with rheumatic inflammatory diseases so that they can balance the management of their condition with their family planning and do not have to relinquish their desire to bear children. Thanks to the campaign, information, resources and advice are provided to these patients at all stages of their journey, as well as a patient guide with resources to address family planning and integrated treatment with their doctor. All hosted at the web: www.hoysipuedosermadre.com. With this campaign, co-created with patients, health care professionals and other stakeholders, we have changed the approach of rheumatic inflammatory diseases in women in the health system.

Other projects of notes have been the designs of **Autoclicks®** and **AVA®** devices. Autoclicks® has been designed by patients and for patients. Around this device, in Spain, the ‘**More Than an Object**’ campaign was launched to make health professionals aware of the difficulties for patients in their daily lives, and their deterioration in the quality of life: not being able to do simple things like opening a door or a bottle... With **Autoclicks®** we want to improve their quality of life with a device that adapts the treatment to their needs.

On the other hand, we have **AVA®**, a unique and innovative electronic management device that will maximize the patient’s experience when injecting the drug, while providing information about its administration, improving its health results and its experience with the treatment.

In **osteoporosis** we have been working in collaboration with our stakeholders: patients’ organizations, scientific societies and political decision-makers to present the “**Manifesto for the prevention of bone fractures**”. Inspired by UCB Iberia and about 30 Entities have signed this manifesto so far, which highlights the lines of action in health policy to prevent the 300,000 fractures that occur in Spain, each year

These patient programs represent a great example of co-creation with patients and stakeholders to help to bring the best experience for patients.

How did UCB Spain perform in 2018 and what is driving the affiliate forward?

We performed very well at UCB Iberia, and if you look at the results of 2018, we reached around 181 million EUR in revenue at a growth of three percent, which is roughly 15 percent of the company’s overall European revenues. This contribution from a country like Spain, which is not the largest nation in the region in terms of population or pharmaceutical market size, is a great achievement and something we are extremely proud of at UCB Iberia.

Currently, we are in the phase of getting our medicines to the patients who need them, even with many of our products coming to the end of their life cycle exclusivity. We are doing this within our two pillars: neurology and immunology.

In the field of neurology, we are working with several medicines. For epilepsy treatment, we have

Briviact[®], Keppra[®], and Vimpat[®] and for Parkinson's disease – Neupro[®].

Vimpat[®] was launched in 2008, and recently we have received an approval for two new indications: one in paediatrics and another in monotherapy. Briviact[®], our newest generation anti-epileptic, received approval in monotherapy in the USA. These are new indications that expand the number of patients who can be helped with our medicines.

In immunology, Cimzia[®] was launched in 2010 to treat rheumatoid arthritis. We did a great job and today this drug is approved for the treatment of numerous inflammatory diseases spanning multiple medical specialties, including ankylosing spondylitis, spondylarthritis and psoriatic arthritis and we are now going through the pricing and reimbursement process for the treatment of psoriasis.

Last year, EMA has approved the Cimzia[®] label to include its potential use during pregnancy and lactation for women with chronic inflammatory rheumatic diseases. This authorization is based on the results of rigorous clinical studies that have shown there was minimal placental transfer of Cimzia[®] from mothers to infants, supporting the continuation of the treatment during pregnancy when considered necessary. The same was demonstrated for breastfeeding. With this decision of the EMA, Cimzia[®] has become a very complete option for a woman of childbearing age, who no longer have to compromise their health for their family plans.

When do you plan to move into osteoporosis?

We are building our team within this field, and UCB's medicine, Evenity[®], which has just received approval, by the US FDA and the PMDA in Japan. We are now waiting for EMA approval later this year. We hope to launch the product in Europe in 2019, and in Spain in 2020.

At UCB, we are striving to close the treatment gap through improving osteoporosis post-fracture care by working directly with the scientific community to foster the adoption and implementation of post-fracture care models and providing education on the cause of fragility fractures.

New guidance was published at EULAR which included recommendations for the management of patients over 50 with a fragility fracture, and prevention of subsequent fracture. These recommendations cover 10 points that really aim to ensure that patients have access to the right care and that physicians and health care systems work collaboratively to ensure the prompt identification and appropriate management to reduce the risk of future fractures.

With Evenity[®] we will work to reduce the risk of future fractures, through a single monthly injection, bringing great value to patients and health care system.

What do you see as the main challenges for innovation to enter the Spanish market?

Firstly, timing, as when you are dealing with the national government for certain decisions, and then must go to each autonomous community, and then even at times each hospital, this takes resources and time.

Secondly, in today's ecosystem, it is imperative to demonstrate the true value and innovation a drug brings to the market compared to what is already available. This allows for better pricing during negotiations at the national level and quicker reimbursement at the regional level.

Thirdly, the access to drugs should be more uniform across Spain. There are differences in products

being available within each autonomous community. Therefore, many patients are receiving drugs based on where they live, rather than if they really need the drug or not. If a patient knows an innovative medicine is available, they have a human right to this, and should not be prevented because they are in one region over another.

Finally, from an overall pharmaceutical market perspective, we must work together to put in place value – based schemes, and work with the healthcare professionals and regulators to co-create such initiatives; for example, risk-sharing agreements based on results being met. With this type of system, we can give greater access to patients in a sustainable manner for the payer. At UCB Iberia we are pioneers in being agile in creating these innovation routes of market access and utilizing patient response outcomes in our discussions.

How does UCB Iberia participate in clinical trials?

The company spends around 25 percent of revenue on R&D, therefore, a large percentage of this is dedicated towards clinical studies. Spain is the largest country outside the US for UCB in clinical trial participation, and we have been part of clinical studies for recent key products such as Briviact[®], Keppra[®], Vimpat[®], and Cimzia[®]. This helps during the market access phase as key opinion leaders already have a hand on experience with these products and understand the value they bring to the market and patients.

UCB supports responsible sharing of clinical study data as a way to uncover new scientific knowledge or insights and thus ultimately benefit our patients and our other stakeholders (<https://www.ucb.com/clinical-studies>)

How does UCB differentiate itself from the competition?

Firstly, we are focused in specific sub-populations of patients to which we provide added value from a clinical standpoint.

Secondly, we are continually finding ways to add value to the healthcare system and patients by looking towards value-based agreements.

Thirdly, patient experience. I am leading global projects in this regard. We think about ways to establish a true partnership with patients that will lead to better patient outcomes and bring them a whole new type of experience. We want to build a customer loyalty and partnership by working with the medical and patient community for the patients by bringing them these added support along their journey with their disease.

What are your objectives over the next few years?

Every year the team at UCB Iberia outdoes the year before. Over the next five years, UCB will be hopefully launching 6 new compounds, so there are great opportunities for us to grow even further. We have a strong pipeline with, for example, bimekizumab, which is in phase III clinical trials and has shown great results in skin and joint treatment, and padsevonil, an innovative epilepsy compound designed to treat the most refractory patients leaving with epilepsy. All these new treatments are exciting and fuel our passion and motivation to help improve the lives of patients across Spain.

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