

# José Miguel Fonken Quiroga - General Director, Adium Mexico

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*Adium Mexico, recently rebranded to reflect the identity of the broader Adium Group, represents no less than 25 percent of the LatAm group's sales. General Director José Miguel Fonken Quiroga shares the affiliate's number one status, stellar growth, vast portfolio, and plans to expand into OTC and vaccines. Fonkel also reflects on Mexico's potential as an innovation hub and the need to correct its regulatory backlog.*

**Could you start by introducing yourself and your career trajectory to our international audience?**

This year, I am celebrating 30 years in the pharmaceutical industry. I started as a part-time medical sales representative and have worked my way up through various commercial positions. I have worked for national, Latin American, European, family-owned, and public companies. I feel I have learned a lot and continue to learn from my bosses, colleagues, and collaborators. That is what motivates me every day to keep working and growing with them.

**Asofarma de México, a subsidiary of Latin America's Adium Group, announced a change of its commercial identity to Adium. What brought about this rebranding, and why now?**

We want the medical community, patients, and all stakeholders to recognize us by the same name throughout Latin America. It is a rebranding to unify our commercial name across Latin America, although our vision, purpose, and values remain unchanged. We are also taking advantage of this change to share best practices among our subsidiaries, encourage collaboration, and improve our market reach.

**How do you plan to communicate this change to all stakeholders, including employees, customers, and partners?**

In Latin America, it has been done according to the timing and capabilities of each subsidiary. It started last year and is expected to be completed by 2025. In Mexico, we started this year during the National Sales Convention. The team was happy because they already knew we were part of the Adium Group. We are proud to identify ourselves with this company name.

It is also an opportunity to talk with healthcare professionals about the important position we hold in the Latin American market. We rank fifth or sixth, depending on the time of measurement, and we have a leading position in the region. Many doctors are surprised to learn this and understand our strength in Latin America. Latin America is our home, and we will stay here, always with the same passion for bringing innovative treatments to the benefit of the medical community and patients.

**As you mentioned, Adium Group is focused on the Latin American market. Can you tell us about the operation in Mexico and its importance?**

In Mexico, we are number one in the ethical market according to IQVIA. It is a highly competitive position that we are very proud of, and we hope to maintain it through our expansion plans for the subsidiary.

Mexico represents 25 percent of the Group's sales and is one of the most important markets. We have many plans to develop in Mexico to maintain our leadership position.

**What growth have you seen over the course of the three years you have been leading the company?**

Beyond my presence here, 10 years ago, we were in 19th position, five years ago in 9th, and by the end of 2023 and throughout this year, we have held the number one position. The growth of Adium Mexico has been tremendous. I am very proud of the team we have built here in Mexico: the quality of the people, their professionalism, their commitment, and their passion. This passion for moving forward and bringing innovative treatments to the medical community and patients to improve their quality of life has been the key to our vertiginous growth.

**Adium boasts a portfolio across a wide range of therapeutic areas, including cardiology, diabetes, pain and rare diseases. Is the entire group's portfolio available in Mexico, or do you follow a more localized approach?**

In Mexico, we have two business units. One is dedicated to primary care, with eight business lines: gastroenterology, urology, gynaecology, osteoarticular, analgesics, and general medicine. The other business unit is oncology and licenses, covering oncology, oncology related to urology, which we call onco-uro, and rare diseases. We have a fairly extensive portfolio, targeting both primary care and high specialty.

**What is the split between the private and public market for Adium in Mexico?**

We are completely established in the private market; more than 90 percent of our sales are retail, and the rest are government sales. However, with the licenses we have and those to come, we should be incorporating more institutional sales.

### **What will be the growth drivers in Mexico? Do you plan to enter new therapeutic areas?**

Today we have two main drivers in the areas I mentioned: cardiology, where our pipeline is more robust, and neurology. In the short term, these will be the two main drivers, along with diabetes, which is also very strong.

Additionally, we are entering the OTC segment, with an already formed line and plans to manage the lifecycle of some of our products with a good legacy, which will become part of our OTC product group.

We currently manage 44 or 45 brands in promotion and have a pipeline of at least 40 more molecules for the next three years. This shows the strength of the products and innovative therapies we can bring to the local population. Also, we are adding vaccines as a very important development area for us.

### **How challenging is it to bring innovation into Mexico, considering the low level of health expenditure in the country?**

One of Mexico's great opportunities to become a hub of innovation with a regional perspective, not only looking north but across the continent, is to increase its health expenditure. Currently, health spending is around 3 percent, below other countries with less significance than Mexico.

There is an urgent need to improve infrastructure and human resources for a country of Mexico's size. The expectation is that Mexico will continue to bet on health, investing more, and that the government and private sector can engage in dialogue and actions of mutual trust to take advantage of the current economic cycle and become an innovation hub.

Today, the Federal Commission for Protection against Health Risks (COFEPRIS) has some initiatives for local companies to develop biotechnology with the intention of supplying the North American market, but this can be magnified even more. The challenge for the new government is to promote collaboration and mutual trust and to continue expanding and developing initiatives such as biologics so that Mexico becomes a great hub of innovation and pharmaceutical development.

### **Do you see this happening?**

At least there is an initiative that is already taking shape. But I insist, this is just an example and the spearhead of this joint action between the government and the private sector, which is how any country develops. Initiatives cannot be solely from the government; they must leverage all the know-how and knowledge of the private sector to maximize their possibilities. This is real, and we can do much more, collaborate much more from the private sector so that the government can generate the innovation hub I mentioned.

## **What are your strategic goals for the next 3-5 years?**

For the next three years, we aim to grow our sales by at least 50 percent. We are confident in this ambition because we have the infrastructure, the qualified human resources committed to our vision, and a robust pipeline. If you look back, our growth has been vertiginous, and we aim to maintain it. We have the people, the infrastructure, and the products. It all depends on COFEPRIS allowing us to proceed through approvals to achieve these goals.

## **How would you rate Mexican legislation and COFEPRIS's performance? What do you think is needed to make these processes more efficient?**

Adium, throughout its presence and geographies in Latin America, has always had the spirit of being a partner and collaborator of the government so that together the healthcare ecosystem progresses, grows, and develops better for the benefit of patients. In this sense, we must highlight some interesting initiatives from COFEPRIS, such as digitalization and the issue of reliance. However, as in any organization, there are also opportunities for improvement. A significant improvement that is needed is correcting the regulatory backlog for obtaining registrations, as well as delays with respect to other requirements necessary to keep our operation running, such as import permits and GMPs. We hope that in the next six-year term, this can be corrected and that COFEPRIS becomes a partner for greater dynamism in the pharmaceutical sector.

## **This year, you celebrate 30 years in the industry. How do you ensure your team improves every year?**

The passion to deliver innovative treatments motivates us all, creating a virtuous circle of success, learning, and continuous improvement. We share this passion and have a leadership model that balances people and business orientation. This balance and the professional quality of our team in Mexico lead us to success. Likewise, as a management team, we have managed to have fun along the way, and that is important. There is pressure and a strong drive for results, but enjoying the process is also key.

There is always something new to learn in this company. We have a motto, "evolving together," which becomes a reality because we are humble and recognize that we do not have all the answers. When we debate and challenge each other, we create something different, test it, and usually get good results. This concept of evolution is not just a slogan; it is something we live by every day. It is clear that what brought us here will not necessarily take us further, and that is a truth we live by daily. We constantly reinvent ourselves, and all these changes and adaptations have always added value.

## **Do you have any final message for our readers?**

Adium is a major player in the Latin American healthcare system. We have the ambition to become the number one company in the region. We aim to double our size in the next four years and be the main partner for any company that wants to bring innovation to Latin America, especially to Mexico.

We see ourselves as the partner of choice for any company that wants to have a presence in Mexico. We have a very strong commercial muscle and excellent qualities in regulatory and access terms. These two characteristics combined make us a very strong partner, in addition to our

presence throughout Latin America, making us the ideal partner for any company that wants to bring its products to Mexico and Latin America.

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