

Quality pharma made in Italy

Abiogen Pharma is a specialist pharmaceutical company focused on bone metabolism and select rare diseases. In September 2014, the company announced an agreement with Lee's Pharmaceutical Holdings Limited for the marketing of Thorens® Cholecalciferol (or vitamin D3) throughout China, Hong Kong, Macau and Taiwan. The agreement underscores Abiogen's ambition to internationalise its business, says Dr. Massimo Di Martino, Abiogen CEO.



Dr. Di Martino founded Abiogen in 1997, following the acquisition of Istituto Gentili by MSD, in order to maintain his family's entrepreneurial tradition, building on the legacy of his great-grandfather Commendatore Alfredo Gentili. Today, contract manufacturing is part of Abiogen's business but Dr. Di Martino emphasises their strengths in in-house research and development. The company focuses on muscle-skeletal health, an area for which it has developed 10 dedicated products, and on diabetes, dermatology and respiratory areas. Since the registration of its first product in Italy in 2005, Abiogen is recognised as a leader in the vitamin D market with Dibase® in Italy, and Thorens® on an international scale. Both are leading prescription medicines that naturally restore vitamin D levels, thanks to the physiological mode of action of cholecalciferol. According to IMS HEALTH, since 2012 Abiogen Pharma is the world leader in Cholecalciferol sales in terms of value. Interesting to note while on the subject of Abiogen's commitment to research is that the company has recently established Galileo Research, a new R&D company as a spin-off of Abiogen

Research Centre. Galileo is fully engaged in the development of a technology platform based on a T-cell line, called TALL-104, as a novel cell therapy approach to cancer treatment. The most advanced Galileo project is currently approaching a phase II clinical in ovarian cancer, a life-threatening disease associated with poor long-term survival, which amounts to 3% of the common gynaecological malignancies among women. TALL-104 has successfully obtained Orphan Drug Designation both in Europe and in the US. Galileo Research is actively seeking partners for TALL-104. Concerning Thorens®, its international vitamin D product, Dr. Di Martino explains that their newly formed partnership with Lee's is purely targeted at marketing Thorens® in China. Abiogen also partners with Lee's for neridronic acid, a bisphosphonate that it has developed for two very important rare diseases: osteogenesis imperfecta (also known as brittle bone disease characterised by unusual frequent fractures due to a genetic defect) and complex regional pain syndrome (a devastating painful oedema of the bone, usually localised in the extremities). Lee's

has been a pioneer in China in the Orphan Disease area. Neridronate is the fourth Orphan drug that Lee's has licensed-in. According to Dr. Di Martino, they have all the knowledge – both regulatory and marketing – for the success of the project. He also sees considerable potential for their vitamin D portfolio, not just in China but globally: "Vitamin D3 deficiency is a silent, global epidemic as people aren't routinely tested for it. It is a health problem aggravated by changing lifestyles in our welfare states: people spend more time indoors, away from the sun, they live longer, and obesity is becoming more of an issue."

Abiogen's plans for the future include an increased presence in Europe. From there, the company aims to gradually expand into Latin America, Asia, Australia and Africa. "With an annual turnover of over 100 million Euros, the Italian market currently contributes to about 95 percent of our total revenue. But we are aiming to become an international company. By 2019, international sales should account for 20% of our total revenues, while we hope that the company can maintain a healthy growth rate at home."



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