

16 Feb 2021 | Interviews

GSK Consumer Healthcare Wants To Lead The Charge Into A Greener, Healthier Future

by [David Ridley](#)

In the second part of our exclusive interview with GSK Consumer Healthcare's EMEA Head Filippo Lanzi, we find out more about GSK's new mission-oriented strategy, for example how its household European OTC brands like Dr Best and Alvedon are already going green. Widening access to medicines via Rx-to-OTC switch is also still a priority, Lanzi says, as well as exciting new trends in the region's wellness market such as CBD.

Since becoming the largest OTC company in the world through its joint venture with Pfizer, GSK Consumer Healthcare is on a mission to make the post-COVID world a better place.

GSK has set itself the ambitious target of becoming carbon-neutral across all its operations by 2030, with the enlarged Consumer Healthcare business contributing to this goal through delivery of its own targets. (Also see "[GSK Says New Consumer Health JV Will Be Climate Action 'World Leader'](#)" - HBW Insight, 19 Nov, 2020.)

GSK Consumer Healthcare CEO Brian McNamara insisted that the business would set "world-leading" sustainability targets, "representing a significant new level of ambition, to drive positive environmental change and help improve everyday health."

Meanwhile in Europe, GSK Consumer Healthcare EMEA head Filippo Lanzi told attendees at a recent Politico event that he wants to break down policy and regulatory barriers preventing self-care reaching its full potential. (Also see "[GSK Wants To Break Down EU Self-Care Barriers](#)" - HBW Insight, 8 Oct, 2020.)

“Self-care is a hidden force in our healthcare system,” Lanzi insisted. “Being able to take care of ourselves has a hugely positive impact on EU citizens and healthcare systems which often goes unnoticed. We need to change that.”

In the second part of our exclusive interview with GSK’s Lanzi, we find out more about GSK’s new mission-oriented strategy, for example how its household European OTC brands like Dr Best and Alvedon are already going green.

Widening access to medicines via Rx-to-OTC switch is also still a priority, Lanzi says, as well as tapping exciting new trends in the region’s wellness market, such as cannabidiol (CBD).

Q We were interested to see GSK commit to becoming carbon-neutral across all its operations by 2030. It was particularly notable that the Consumer Healthcare business will be setting concrete targets for its OTC brands. Could you say any more about this at this stage?

A Sustainability is a trend which is extremely relevant to all of us as citizens as well as managers of corporations. You are right to point to the positioning we have taken, which is to set clear goals for the new business. We believe that environmental sustainability is strategically important to GSK Consumer Healthcare and to GSK as a whole. Our sustainability strategy rests on three pillars. Firstly, we will reduce our carbon emissions by 50% and to have at least five carbon neutral manufacturing sites by 2025. Secondly, we will reduce plastic waste by using 100% recyclable and useable packaging by 2025, wherever quality and safety will allow – because we can’t forget that we are selling medicines and healthcare products. And, finally, we are committed to reducing deforestation. The company has taken a very strong position on this, which we are proud of, because we care about people’s quality of life and also about the sustainability of the ecosystems which we are part of.

Q Are there any existing projects in the Consumer Healthcare business that you can point to as examples of GSK’s sustainability strategy?

A In Germany, we have an iconic oral health brand called Dr Best. The brand has launched a range of toothbrushes made from sustainably sourced bamboo. The handle is fully biodegradable and the bristles are made with a renewable castor oil.

The product was launched a few months ago because we know that German consumers are very passionate about sustainability. Another great example is our Swedish analgesic, Alvedon, which is another iconic local brand operating in a very climate-conscious market. The blister packs and the outer packaging are both now made from 100% recyclable materials.

Q In a recent speech you urged for more attention to be given to self-care within the European Union's Pharmaceutical Strategy, calling for consumer health literacy and pharmacy to be strengthened. How does a company like GSK show leadership and influence policy at this level?

A Firstly, this is something that really matters to me. What you saw during the Politico event was the first step in a journey, which started with us collecting tangible data on the potential of self-care in Europe through our study 'The Health-Economic Benefits of Self-Care in Europe', to be shared and discussed with all relevant stakeholders across the sector and within the region. At this stage, we have identified the under-utilization of pharmacists and low levels of health literacy as two key barriers to development. With regards to the under-utilization of pharmacists, our starting point is that about 58% of the population in Europe has access to a pharmacy within five minutes of their home. This gives a great sense of the strength of the pharmacy network and the opportunity for pharmacies as key enablers of self-care.

"As a company, we really pride ourselves in being expert-recommended, and core to our company strategy is interacting with pharmacies in a way that delivers value to them but also builds knowledge and awareness about the benefits of GSK Consumer Healthcare products and the different solutions these products can offer to consumers."

As a company, we really pride ourselves in being expert-recommended, and core to our company strategy is interacting with pharmacies in a way that delivers value to them but also builds knowledge and awareness about the benefits of GSK Consumer Healthcare products and the different solutions these products can offer to consumers. When it comes to health literacy, we recognize that we bear a certain degree of responsibility as a consumer healthcare company, because one of the ways we interact with consumers is through our products. Therefore, we are well-placed to help people better understand and manage their own health. However, only one in five European consumers feels confident about managing their health. This is a call to action for GSK Consumer Healthcare, because I believe there is much more we can do.

Q How receptive do you think regulators will be to these kinds of company-driven initiatives?

A By nature, I am optimist! But it's not just about being about optimistic, it's also about acknowledging someone needs to lead the change for it to happen. Our hope is that we can kick off by provoking discussion and follow up with some pilots. I think it's important to find early supporters of these initiatives and then try to scale them up. There is a lot to do, but we are committed, and this is the right moment to realize this opportunity.

Q Moving on to new opportunities in the European self-care market, are you encouraged by the recent EU-wide Rx-to-OTC switches of Fortacin and desloratadine?

A At GSK, switching is an area we keep a close eye on and, as a company, we have an excellent track record of successful reclassifications. Globally, we've had five Rx-to-OTC switches in the last seven years, with the most recent one being Voltaren Arthritis Pain Gel in the US. So it's certainly an area we look at with a high degree of interest. Switching brings positive change to the public health systems and is something that is core to our overall strategy. We will see how things progress in that area.

Q What about CBD? A few major consumer healthcare companies are now making moves in this booming global market. Is this also on the agenda for GSK in 2021?

A As you say, this has been quite a hot topic for a while. There is an increased interest in CBD among consumers and, since we are a consumer-centric company, considering introducing CBD to our portfolio is something we would look at. However, within the regulatory landscape for CBD in Europe, there has been much uncertainty and change up until now. Therefore, we are watching this space and exploring how we could potentially provide safe and effective solutions which satisfy consumer needs. If you look at our new vitamins, minerals and supplements portfolio, especially with the addition of legacy Pfizer brands like Centrum, we are perfectly placed to explore opportunities like this one.