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HBW Insight's Key Takeaways From 2021: #1 Join The Self-Care Movement

by David Ridley

The first year of the pandemic saw a move among consumers towards prevention and wellness under the banner of "self-care". In 2021, the "self-care movement" really started to gain momentum as these new healthcare habits endured, and companies responded with more wellness options, in some cases even pivoting towards becoming pure self-care players.

Last year's biggest trend, and one that in many ways encompassed and drove all the others, was the "self-care movement."

"The self-care movement is really about shifting the focus in healthcare today to include self-care and preventative care and treatment and also arming people with the information that they need to really take care of themselves," explained Bayer Consumer Healthcare's Daniella Foster in an episode of HBW Insight's Over the Counter podcast.

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A move towards wider adoption of self-care had begun during the first year of the pandemic when significant numbers of consumers started to embrace "wellness" practices and took a more proactive role in their own health as a necessity.

But the self-care movement really started to gain momentum in 2021 as these new healthcare habits endured, and companies responded with more wellness options and preventative health products.

Demand For Supplements

Major players like GlaxoSmithKline Consumer Healthcare and Bayer Consumer Health reported during the first quarter continued demand for dietary supplements, indicating that the adoption

of preventative, wellness products had not been a flash in the pan.

Bayer Consumer Health was able to solidify the supplement sales gains it recorded during the pandemic, posting sales at its Nutritionals category up 0.6% in Q1. This may seem like a small rise, but when you take into account the company's 2020 Q1 results – which saw this category grow by a third – this was still a big increase on pre-pandemic sales levels. (Also see "[Bayer Cements Supplement Sales Gains From Initial COVID Boost](#)" - HBW Insight, 13 May, 2021.)

“They've managed to cement that increase in sales one year on,” HBW Insight's Europe managing editor Tom Gallen explained on our podcast. “And Bayer pointed to Europe as one of the regions where they've really seen this increase in demand for self-care [among consumers], using supplements to strengthen their immune systems.”

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By Q3, sustained supplement category growth enabled Bayer Consumer Health to raise its full year sales guidance for the second time. (Also see "[Successful Innovation And Supplement Gains Drive 'Exceptional' Q3 For Bayer](#)" - HBW Insight, 9 Nov, 2021.)

Hailing an “exceptional quarter” for the division, Consumer Health head Heiko Schipper said the performance had been driven by an “extremely strong” showing from the Nutritionals category, as well as successful product launches.

Vitamins, minerals and supplements sales also boosted GSK Consumer Healthcare's Q3 sales, which grew by 19% to £406m, with Centrum and Emergen C advancing at a strong double-digit rate, driven by new product launches and a continued consumer focus on health and wellness. (Also see "[GSK Raises Product Prices in US And Europe As Costs Rise](#)" - HBW Insight, 28 Oct, 2021.)

Self-Care Pivot

As the movement continued to gather pace in 2021, companies operating in the consumer healthcare market looked to pivot towards self-care.

“COVID has put a spotlight on self-care, and consumer health couldn't be happier,” commented HBW Insight's Malcolm Spicer on an episode of the Over The Counter podcast. “And it may very well be that companies are saying, well, you know, we can really capitalize on this trend better if we have a company that is on its own in consumer health.”

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Johnson & Johnson towards the end of the year announced it would spin out its Consumer

Health division into a standalone, publicly traded company within two years.

According to CEO Alex Gorsky, consistent growth in consumer spending on self-care influenced J&J's decision. (Also see "[J&J Without Consumer Health? Tylenol, Band-Aid Marketer Plans To Divest Business In Two Years](#)" - HBW Insight, 12 Nov, 2021.)

"We've seen a significant evolution in these markets, particularly on the consumer side, whether it's the innovation being sought by consumers, whether it's the evolving nature of the channels, distribution, the shift to e-commerce and as we observe that and I must say, I think it was accelerated quite significantly with COVID-19, where we're seeing greater interest in personal care and taking care of families," he commented.

Meanwhile Perrigo became a pure consumer healthcare player in 2021 with the \$1.55bn sale of its generic Rx business to Altaris Capital Partners LLC. (Also see "[It's Official: Perrigo's Entirely Consumer Health](#)" - HBW Insight, 6 Jul, 2021.)

With the planned €1.8bn (\$2.1bn) acquisition of France's HRA Pharma – which is expected to close in the first half of this year – Perrigo could soon complete its pivot to self-care, the firm's UK & Ireland chief Neil Lister told HBW insight. (Also see "[If Successful, HRA Pharma Acquisition Will Complete Perrigo's Pivot Towards Self-Care](#)" - HBW Insight, 21 Dec, 2021.)

"HRA are championing self-care, they're helping get more conversations out of doctor's surgeries and into pharmacies, and that's a good thing," Lister commented. "With aging populations, increasing pressure on healthcare systems, the solution has got to be self-care."

WHO Resolution

Consumer health companies will continue to shape their strategies around maximizing self-care adoption in 2022 and beyond. And a proposed World Health Organization resolution on self-care could really light a fire under the movement.

The Global Self-Care Federation, which linked the publication of its Self-Care Readiness Index to a call for a "global compact" that would pave the way for such a resolution, thinks that now is the time to strike, while the iron is hot. (Also see "[GSCF Calls For WHO-Backed Global Self-Care Agreement](#)" - HBW Insight, 6 Oct, 2021.)

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For self-care expert and academic Dr Austen El-Osta, having a champion for self-care like the World Health Organization would be an "game changer" for self-care. (Also see "[WHO Support A Game-Changer For Emerging Global Self-Care Movement, Resolution 'Likely'](#)" - HBW Insight, 29

Nov, 2021.)

“There is a movement now. And that movement is picking up momentum,” he insisted. “Self-care is the oldest type of care and it’s again being taken more seriously by individuals from all walks of life, including policy makers and health systems the world over.”