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Belgian Initiative Raises Awareness

Medaxes Promotes Industry With ‘Generic Medicines Day’

by David Wallace

Belgium’s Medaxes off-patent industry association has run a Generic Medicines Day to raise public awareness of the benefits of generics, as well as the obstacles that the industry faces.

Belgian off-patent industry association Medaxes has highlighted the value of generics in a promotional campaign built around a special Generic Medicines Day event.

The campaign, which ran in September, emphasized the savings achieved by Belgium’s healthcare system through generics – and the potential to increase these savings through improved uptake – and deployed promotional activities that included a live online event featuring interviews with key opinion leaders.

Emphasizing “the societal value of our sector,” Medaxes managing director Joris Van Assche set out the economic benefits of generics during the online event, pointing out that “thanks to generic medicines, [local health insurer] INAMI will this year, in 2020, be able to realise savings of €1.917bn (\$2.25bn).”

Medaxes chose 17 September as its Generic Medicines Day because this was the day on which the Belgian state budget to reimburse drugs would be exhausted if not for the savings provided by generic medicines. “This calculation once again underlines the immense importance of our sector for the accessibility of healthcare,” Van Assche insisted.

With the pharmaceutical landscape set to see an influx of “new, very promising drugs,” in the coming years, Van Assche explained that “the goal is that these drugs can be made available to all patients who really need them.” But this “requires financial means,” he pointed out. “Greater use of generic drugs is undoubtedly part of the solution, as it creates market momentum, with

price reductions and savings as a result.”

As well as the importance of generic competition in lowering prices and making the best treatments available to the highest number of patients, Van Assche also highlighted the improved supply-chain security that was offered by multi-source off-patent medicines.

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However, Van Assche also acknowledged the “limited rate of utilization of generic medicines in Belgium,” pointing to a figure of 38% in the community pharmacy setting and just 18% in hospitals that was “still very far from the European average.”

A combination of low utilization and price erosion – that had seen an average price decline of a third over the past 10 years – made the industry model “fragile,” Van Assche warned. And despite acknowledging the complexities of the market, he insisted that price still played a key role in the sector’s dynamics, insisting that an increase was needed to take the proportion of prescriptions for “best value” drugs from just over half of Belgian prescriptions closer to 80%. (Also see "[*Greater Uptake Must Become Belgium’s ‘New Normal’*](#)" - Generics Bulletin, 13 Jul, 2020.)

To achieve Medaxes’ goals, “new concepts and tailored processes will have to be introduced,” Van Assche concluded, pointing to the association’s hope that measures to address the obstacles facing the generics industry will be included in a new government pact with the pharmaceutical industry. (Also see "[*Belgian Body Welcomes Clawback Exemption Amid Price Cuts*](#)" - Generics Bulletin, 30 Apr, 2020.)