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It is with mixed feelings that I write this, my final editorial for the *Journal of Medical Marketing*. I have decided to step down after founding and editing the journal for most of its existence. It is a difficult decision to leave “my baby” but I am forced to by pressures of my other work. However, I know that SAGE and the new editors, Peter Dumovic and William Trombetta, have great plans for the journal and I wish them much success. All that is left for me to do now is to, first, preview the papers in this issue and then make my essential and sincere thanks.

As the market for medicines and medical technology continues to globalise, we increasingly realise that our Western, Developed Market, heritage has left great gaps in our understanding of how emerging markets work. An important contribution to this is the paper by Esinam Afi Kayi, Roger Ayimbillah Atinga and Gloria A Ansa on the information sources of Ghanaian physicians. I was impressed by the way in which their methodology drew out the complexity of the situation with respect not only to physician variation but also patient circumstances. Most interesting of all, to my western eyes, is the competition from local plant medicines. This is probably not something that figures high on the radar of most medical marketers so this paper tells us something we might not otherwise have known.

Another emerging market perspective on a very different industry phenomenon is provided by Swagat Tripathy and Vandana Prajapati’s paper on M&A activity in India. Their paper surveys recent activity and discusses possible future trends. This is a useful paper because India is one of very few emerging market countries that is a very significant player on both the demand side and the supply side of the market. For those investing in, selling to or competing with Indians, this is a useful paper.

The paper by Herni J Astuti and Keisuke Nagase addresses a very topical subject, since both healthcare providers and manufacturing companies have become interested in the subject of the customer experience. It takes careful methodology to understand, with validity, issues such as loyalty and the authors have carried out a good piece of research. I was especially intrigued by the role of customer expectations and the constraints of imposed circumstances.

The paper by Avadhut Arun Patwardhan, Neeraj Pandey and SM Dhume addresses technology adoption, a subject close to the research interests of my own group at the University of Hertfordshire. In this case, the authors use the models of technology adoption to better understand physicians’ use of the internet, which is of obvious relevance in markets where direct to consumer advertising is not allowed. I found their distinction between personal and private internet usage especially interesting.

Generic medicines are obviously a dominant force in most markets now and understanding physicians’ attitudes to them is important for both branded and generic markets. The paper by Mohamed A Hassali, Alian A Alrasheedy, Christopher WS Chan, Fahad Saleem and Balamurugan Tangiisuran sheds interesting light on this in the particular context of private medical centres. Their work echoes some of mine in highlighting the concerns about quality and provenance that many physicians have concerning generics. I think this work provides actionable insight for marketers on both sides of this market.

Another topic of close interest to me is the access to physicians that is possible for sales representatives. So I was delighted to see the paper by George A Chressantthis, Andrew Sfekas, Pratap Khedkar, Nitin Jain and Prashant Poddar. Aside from being an exemplary piece of research methodology, I was interested to see the heterogeneous contexts influencing access and the effects of other factors, such as technology usage and medical school attitudes to industry.

Saleem’s paper, on the challenges of managing pharmacies in Malaysia, paints an intriguing picture of the real-world, front line of pharmaceutical marketing in emerging markets. The pharmacists’ perceptions of price wars and the less than ideal practices that this seems to engender in unregulated markets was an eye-opener for me and I’m sure it will be for other medical marketers.

Finally, I will close with my thanks. I’d like to thank all those who have contributed to my journal, as I like to think of it, over the years. I’d like to thank my editorial board, without whom I could not have done my job. I’d like to thank all those at SAGE responsible for the journal, perhaps especially Divya Jyoti Munjal, who has been an exceptional efficient and tolerant production editor. Finally, I thank all of your who have read the journal over my time as editor. I hope you have found it as enjoyable and useful an experience as I have and that you will continue to support the journal under its new editors.

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Our crop of papers from other journals and relevant to medical marketers is, as usual, an eclectic mix that will contain something of interest to all of our readers.

The first paper to look at considers corporate capability of personalized medicine development in the pharmaceutical industry. In this paper, Mei Haruya and Shingo Kano break down this important new capability into a number of sub-capabilities and look to see if this model fits in practice. The sub-capabilities, interestingly, concern new product development and both internal and external co-development of companion diagnostics. They find both good fit with this model and that the critical path to PMD capability runs from NPD capability via external co-development capability rather than via internal co-development capability. This certainly seems borne out by the alliance activity in this area. A fascinating, useful and timely paper.

On a contiguous topic, our next paper looks at the constraints in acquiring and utilizing directors’ experience with relation to new-market entry in the pharmaceutical industry. The authors provide evidence that firms considering entering new markets are more likely to appoint directors with experience in those markets and that directors’ market experience increases the likelihood of new-market entry. They go on to explore the constraints in both acquiring experienced directors and utilizing their experience and find that experienced directors are less likely to join firms with financial restatements in the recent past or with a lower status than the firms where they currently serve. They also find that interlocking directors’ experience is less likely to lead to new-market entry for firms that lack new-product development experience and that exhibit a high level of market overlap with interlocked firms. This is an interesting paper that reveals how quite individual issues can interact with strategy.

Still on the topic of new product development, our third paper looks at the effective implementation of relationship orientation in new product launches. As the authors state, prevailing new product launch research has concentrated on firms’ general customer and competitor focus on predicting launch performance, and mainly applied a product-centred or marketing mix perspective on considering effective strategic and tactical launch activities. Refreshingly, this paper examines the impact of firms’ relationship orientation on launch performance and the key activities through which it is transformed into performance in the new product launch context. Looking at data collected from 109 new product launches in pharmaceutical companies, the results show that sales force management and relationship leveraging mediate relationship orientation’s impact on launch performance through complexity intertwined relationships. The study highlights the role of the relational perspective in new product launch and shows how firms can effectively enhance the successful commercialization of new products through relationship-oriented sales and marketing activities. This is an unusual example of a practically useful academic paper.

Although sometimes neglected by marketers, supply chain is an important part of product launch and our fourth paper looks at planning operations before market launch for balancing time-to-market and risks in pharmaceutical supply chains. As the authors say, large volumes of product need to be ready to fill the downstream supply chain immediately at market launch but building up the required inventory is connected to several risks that are unique to the pharmaceutical sector, such as market authorisation. To mitigate this uncertainty, the authors develop a two-stage stochastic model to support market launch preparation decisions. It trades off the costs of accepting these risks, for example by risk packaging before authorization, against the lost revenue caused by risk-averse operations. The model is applied to a case based on an empirical study. They claim that their approach results in significant savings compared to current practices and so provides an example of how quantitative methodology can provide valuable decision support for product launch operations, even when complex regulatory affairs need to be considered. This paper is an unusual but important perspective on launch preparedness.

On a different but still very relevant topic, our fifth paper looks at the relationship between product alliances, alliance networks, and shareholder value. The authors start from the position that, despite sustained interest in product alliance activity, little is known regarding the effect of product alliances on shareholder value. They point out that proponents of alliances justify their formation by emphasizing access to relevant resources and know-how, whilst critics highlight the risks inherent in alliance partner opportunism. To reconcile these opposing viewpoints, they develop and test a conceptual framework that predicts the impact of product alliance activity and the broader
network it engenders on shareholder value: stock returns, systematic risk, and idiosyncratic risk. Their examination of 359 biopharmaceutical firms and their associated networks over a 20-year observation window shows that unanticipated product alliance activity is associated with not only lower idiosyncratic risk, but also with lower stock returns. Further, unanticipated network centrality of the focal firm and the unanticipated density of ties in its extended network significantly moderate the effects of product alliance activity. This is a well-researched paper whose findings help to reconcile the divergent views on product alliance activity.

And our final paper this issue looks at trends in market access for specialty biologics, which are the fastest growing class of biopharmaceutical products in terms of the number of new brand launches and rates of health care spending in the U.S. and globally. This article outlines important trends impacting market access to specialty biologics in the U.S. and globally, placing particular importance evolving methods for managing specialty product utilization and reimbursement. The paper examines the reshaping of the specialty product market access landscape in the U.S. through the availability of oral biologic formulations distributed to patients via high-touch, high-involvement specialty pharmacies. It also considers the rising role of risk sharing between specialty product manufacturers and insurers as a way to balance rewards of access with the risks inherent in radical new specialty therapeutics is discussed. Challenges posed by specialty biosimilars to traditional ways of ensuring market access and fair reimbursement are also outlined, as is the impact of health care reforms on market access for specialty biologics in the U.S. This is particular discusses the growing need for comparative outcomes research and the application of the principles of health technology assessments adapted, in part, from their apparent success in ensuring equitable and cost-effective access to biologics in the E.U. For anyone working in the biologics area, this is an essential paper.

References

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