



# FOCUS

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## The Race for Oral Obesity Drugs – Competing for Next-Gen Status in a US\$126B Market

(Source: An article by Ben Adams for FiercePharma)

It is no secret that GLP-1 drugs are seeing extreme popularity in pharma, with mega-blockbuster sales in a market that could be worth US\$126 billion by 2030. But innovation in pharma does not stand still, and already next-gen candidates are in late-stage testing with hopes of moving to the next step. These next-gen GLPs will be in oral form which would offer convenience, lower development costs and simplify marketing, making them a true game-changer for ease of use.

In a new report by GlobalData, analysts noted that injectables are associated with negative attributes such as the requirement to attend a professional clinic. Analysts also highlight several key manufacturers seeking an oral route for the future, including Novo Nordisk and Eli Lilly, who are both dominating the GLP-1 market with *Wegovy* and *Zepbound*.

According to GlobalData, Novo and Lilly are looking to boost market penetration with the advent of oral version. Novo is currently leading efforts due to its oral GLP-1 drug *Rybelsus*, which has already been approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration in the treatment of type 2 diabetes.

*Rybelsus* is already in Phase 3 testing for a label expansion that would include obesity while Novo is also working on an experimental Phase 3 candidate *NN-9932*, slated to be launched by the end of 2025. GlobalData predicts that Novo's oral candidate has a 35% likelihood of approval, the highest probability of success among all drugs in this category.

Meanwhile, Lilly's Phase 3 oral GLP candidate, *orgoglipron calcium*, is projected to launch in 2026. Also on the horizon, China-based Jiangsu Hengrui's *HRS-9531* is also a Phase 3 contender, and works as a dual GLP-1 and GIP receptor agonist.

GlobalData notes that with expected drug sales of US\$126 billion by 2030, this drug category presents a very lucrative market for drug developers.

Jasper Morely, pharma analyst for GlobalData, noted "NovoNordisk and Eli Lilly have already reaped substantial rewards in the injectable segment. However, the emergence of oral therapies is reshaping the landscape. With 63 active products in the pipeline, the race for the first approval is intensifying. Nevertheless, Novo Nordisk and Eli Lilly are positioned at the forefront, striving to capitalize on their already successful GLP-1R portfolios and solidify their dominance in the GLP-1R market."

## In Brief...

◆ **Cencora** is introducing **Accelerate Pharmacy Solutions**, which combines Cencora's pharmacy and supply chain solutions to deliver an enhanced customer experience and integrated support to address evolving needs. Solutions range from specialty drug purchasing and cost management strategies to logistics, transport, supply chain and inventory management solutions.

◆ **Cardinal Health 200 LLC**, a business unit of **Cardinal Health**, has been awarded a maximum US\$9 billion modification and extension to its contract with Defense Logistics Agency (DLA) through the exercise of a 30 month option. The contract is to support worldwide ordering and distribution of consumable, commercial, brand name and generic medical surgical supplies in support of the medical surgical prime vendor Generation V program. The project covers locations in the continental US through June 6, 2027. Separately Cardinal opened a new distribution center in Boylston, MA supporting its U.S. Medical Products and Distribution business. The facility services healthcare customers across the Northeastern U.S. with modernized operations and expanded capacity as well as specialized handling capabilities for products with strict storage requirements.

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## Duopharm and Hefame Join IFPW

As 2024 comes to a close, we are pleased to announce that Duopharm (Senegal) and Hefame (Spain) have joined IFPW as wholesale distribution members.

Duopharm is a pharmaceutical distribution company based in Senegal. Founded in 2003, the company maintains its vision to strengthen the link between the wholesale supplier and community pharmacist while focusing on becoming a key player in the African wholesale market and driving development of pharma while serving the continent through leadership. It maintains three subsidiaries – Sophadex (responsible for export wholesaler activity and functions as a pharmaceutical hub), Pharmaspace (responsible for promotion and distribution of parapharma products in Senegal) and Defi Pharma (a pharmaceutical factory project with development underway in partnership with IFC.)

Hefame was founded in the 1950s in Murcia as Hermandad Farmacéutica del Mediterráneo S.C.L., a cooperative distributing medicines and para-pharmaceutical products to pharmaceutical offices. Hefame maintains a



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The next issue of the FOCUS Newsletter will be distributed on January 9, 2025.

The IFPW staff wishes all of its members a joyous holiday season & successful 2025!

## Duopharm and Hefame (*cont'd.*)...

significant presence in the whole of Spain, with offices in Madrid, and 14 logistics warehouses across the country. Hefame proudly serves 5,637 pharmacies, 4,171 members and 1,466 customers, and they are strongly committed to health, the environment and society while providing the best technologies to advise and improve the daily management of pharmacies.

IFPW is proud to have Duopharm and Hefame as part of the IFPW membership, and looks forward to their participation, along with their insights and perspectives as leading wholesalers in their regions.

## What's Driving Growing Optimism About India In Pharma Boardrooms

(Source: An article by Anju Ghangurde for Scrip Citeline)

India comes with its share of complexities and concerns for innovator firms, including in areas like pricing and intellectual property rights (IPR), but it's a market that's evolving across multiple dimensions and cannot be ignored or discounted, according to in country experts.

The optimism is driven by the changing demographics in India. Factors include an older population set to double by 2050, growing health coverage and affluence, rising consumption beyond the metro cities and a string of reforms underway both in the regulatory and policy spheres.

At the annual summit of the Organization of Pharmaceutical Producers of India (OPPI), Vineet Gupta, managing director, Eli Lilly and Company Pvt. Ltd, signaled "growing optimism" about India in boardroom discussions with several favorable factors playing out as the country emerges as one of the fastest-growing economies of the world. India is poised to be a US\$10 trillion-plus economy over the next decade.

"Our fiscals are strong, they are in place, especially in a very volatile global environment. That makes India a bright spot in the global context," Gupta said at a panel discussion moderated by Priyanka Aggarwal, managing director and senior partner, Boston Consulting Group (BCG).

Gupta also pointed to a large aging population which implied greater healthcare needs were in store as well as the growing disease burden in areas ranging from obesity and diabetes to cancer.

A BCG-OPPI report released at the event projects that India will have a large and ageing population (100 million-plus elderly) by 2025, while the country's disease profile has seen a significant shift in the last two decades with non-communicable diseases accounting for over 65% of disease burden in 2020. The rising incidence of chronic diseases will require innovation in healthcare delivery, the report noted.

Changing consumption patterns as rising income levels propel the growing middle class to invest more on health and wellness and improving health infrastructure, supported by both public and private investment flows, were some of the other factors that the Lilly executive highlighted.

"We see new hospitals, training centers coming up and the good part of this growth is that a lot of it is happening beyond the metro cities in Tier 1/2/3 towns. That also means many more

people have access to high-quality healthcare," Gupta explained.

Co-panelist Anirudh Tara, managing director and partner, BCG, highlighted the rising affluence in India. About 25% households (80 million) are projected to be affluent by 2030 (5x in 20 years), according to the BCG-OPPI report.

"In terms of the sheer size, that is going to be larger than most European countries at that point," Tara said.

## In Brief (*cont.*)

- ◆ **AstraZeneca** received approval from the **U.S. Food and Drug Administration** for its PD-L1 inhibitor *Imfinzi* (*durvalumab*). The approval is for the treatment of small cell lung cancer (LS-SCLC) patients who have not had disease progression after concurrent chemotherapy and radiation treatments. Imfinzi becomes the first immunotherapy for LS-SCLC, an aggressive form of the disease with a survival rate between 15% and 30% after diagnosis.

- ◆ **Walgreens Boots Alliance** is in discussions to sell itself to private equity firm **Sycamore Partners**. Walgreens has been working with its advisers regarding the sale of the company to potential buyers but is currently in talks with only Sycamore.

- ◆ **Pfizer's Paxlovid** topped the world's top ten best-selling drugs list in the third quarter of 2024, beating AbbVie's TND-inhibitor *Humira*, which saw revenues continue to slide due to biosimilar competition. Sales of *Paxlovid* were boosted by increased U.S. demand, reflecting a global wave of infections, as well as a one-off contract with the U.S. strategic national stockpile worth US\$442 million in delivered doses. Pfizer expects *Paxlovid* to deliver US\$5.5 billion in annual revenues.

- ◆ **Sigma Healthcare Ltd.** has announced a merger with **Chemist Warehouse**, contingent on shareholder approval at an upcoming Extraordinary General Meeting. The independent expert has deemed the related party arrangements fair and reasonable, and Sigma's directors are urging shareholders to vote in favor. This merger is a significant move in the pharmaceutical sector, promising potential growth and strategic advantages for Sigma.

- ◆ **Vertex Pharmaceuticals**, the **Saudi Arabian Ministry of Industry and Mineral Resources**, and the **Ministries of Investment and Health** inked a Memorandum of Understanding aimed at the advancement of R&D capabilities in the country, as well as expansion of bio manufacturing for cell and gene therapies, and to train the next generation of health experts. Vertex has identified Saudi Arabia as a country with a large eligible patient population for its new CRISPR Therapeutics-partnered gene therapy *Casgevy*, which treats sickle cell disease and beta thalassemia.

- ◆ **Amgen** announced an investment of US\$1 billion to build a second drug manufacturing facility in Holly Springs, North Carolina. The plant will incorporate both innovativetechnology and sustainable practices. In recent years, North Carolina has become a hot spot for biopharma, with a string of high-profile outlays in 2024. **Reckitt** also announced that it will expand its facility in the area to create the company's largest OTC production facility in the U.S.

(Sources: Company Press Releases, Drug Store News, FiercePharma, Reuters and Scrip Citeline)