

EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW



Andrew Jenkin

MANAGING DIRECTOR, INOVA AUSTRALIA AND NEW ZEALAND

Retail Pharmacy talks to the regional head of the company whose products include Diffiam, Demazin and DermaVeen about its operation and performance in the Covid period.

Andrew, tell us a little about yourself and your experience in the pharmaceutical sector.

I was born and raised in South Africa where I completed my studies and began my career in the pharmaceutical industry. I started as a trainee sales rep (aka a merchandiser) with Beecham in 1989, before becoming a pharmacy sales representative. I then went on to spend nine enjoyable years calling on pharmacies and doctors with a range of prescription and OTC brands, before moving into marketing. Since then I've worked for various local and international pharmaceutical companies in sales, marketing and leadership roles.

In 2005, I moved to Australia with my wife and three children while working for Pfizer Consumer Healthcare. While in Australia I've worked for Novartis, MSD, Bayer and even a second round at a very different Pfizer Consumer Healthcare, before joining the team at iNova as the Managing Director for ANZ in November 2019.

iNova is a broad business with prescription and OTC assets. How has Covid-19 impacted your business?

Our initial and most important focus was, and continues to be, ensuring we keep our team and consequently our customers safe. We implemented a daily internal communication cadence to ensure everyone was aware of the developing situation and the decisions we were making. We made the decision very early on to move our pharmacy and prescription sales teams off the road and to working from home, and also closed our Chatswood office [in Sydney] to ensure we removed the risk of commuting or being in the office.

While our prescription portfolio has remained steady during the Covid period, some of our OTC products have experienced significant fluctuations in demand, both up and down. Our DermaVeen range has performed particularly well during Covid-19.

For pharmacists, and your business, the cold and flu range is key as consumers are staying more isolated.

We certainly saw a huge spike in demand for our cough, cold and sore throat products, including Diffiam, Demazin, Duro-Tuss and Rikodeine, in March and April. However, we've since seen a drop-off in demand for winter products, which reflects the lower incidence of cold and flu transmission in the community as a result of lockdown and social distancing measures.

However, our sales team have done a fantastic job of partnering with our customers to ensure pharmacies have appropriate stock levels to account for the reduced winter season.

We've observed that consumers are gravitating more to self-select and natural products and may be avoiding direct conversations with pharmacists about their (or their loved ones') cold and flu-like symptoms, which means consumers may be forgoing more efficacious products. There may therefore be a role for pharmacists in terms of having more proactive conversations with customers about symptoms and treatments, subject of course to Covid being tested for and ruled out.

What are your short term priorities with the business?

We're continuing to focus on pulling sales through pharmacies to consumers for our winter brands (Diffiam, Demazin,

Rikodeine and Duro-Tuss). This includes a specific focus on the newly relaunched D-D-Demazin, which pharmacists and their teams can recommend with confidence.

With big direct-to-consumer advertising budgets, great margins and no concerns about Demazin recommendations driving sales in other channels (did I mention it's pharmacy only?) we're confident we can continue to build closer partnerships with pharmacy and pharmacists with our leading cough, cold and flu brands and our competitive commercial offering.

We've also recently launched a vitamin and supplement range that we're excited about, called Kynd, currently available in select pharmacies. It's our first foray into the VMS space and it's a brand that gives back – with a pouch of Kynd Immunity Powder being donated to a person in need for every product purchased.

What role do you see pharmacists playing?

It's easy to forget what an important role pharmacists play in managing public health. Consumer interaction with pharmacists is often limited to a short conversation around the dos and don'ts of their medicine. It does sometimes take an extraordinary year like 2020 to remind everyone that pharmacists and their teams are vital in providing frontline healthcare needs, patient support and advice. Whether that's during the Covid-19 outbreak, the annual cough, cold and flu season, or for a myriad of other health conditions.

Pharmacists provide important access to health knowledge, guidance and care. I'm extremely proud of the role iNova plays in supporting these efforts, by providing trusted brands that improve people's health and wellbeing every day.