

Patient compliance: an interview with Dr. Bassam Damaj, CEO of Innovus Pharma

Published on May 20, 2013 at 5:13 AM

Interview conducted by April Cashin-Garbutt, BA Hons (Cantab)

insights from industry

Dr. Bassam DAMAJ

President & CEO, Innovus Pharma



Please can you give a brief introduction to patient compliance?

A medication's optimal results are achieved with specific dose levels and times of administration.

In order for patients to achieve the maximum benefit from a medication, they have to adhere to the prescribed dose and time of use.

Hence, compliance is defined by the adherence of the patients to the doses and times the medication has to be taken.

How important is patient compliance and why is better compliance one of Innovus Pharma's aims?

Patient compliance, to adhere to the dose and time of taking a medication, is essential in obtaining clinical benefit.

Non-compliance adherence of patients to their medication has caused tremendous medical and clinical problems for patients in specific and to the whole population in general.

A specific example of non-patient compliance is in the case of antibiotics. Resistance of bacteria to antibiotics stems from patients not adhering to the full regimen of an antibiotic, or using it for less than the time than they should or using it when it is not necessary, hence continuously exposing the bacteria to the same antibiotic.

This continuous exposure creates resistance and results in non-effectiveness of the antibiotic.

You became the CEO of Innovus in January of this year. Could you tell us about your past experience and how this led you to head up such a compliance focused company?

Compliance adherence to medication has been a growing issue in the medical field and it has affected the lives of many people.

Being in this field for a very long time made me realize that pharmaceutical companies do not specifically focus on this issue.

At Innovus Pharma we made it one of our focuses and have geared our efforts toward bring in products that make it easy for patients to achieve the compliance needed to obtain better clinical benefit.

Please can you give some examples of Innovus' products that have improved patient compliance?

Our dermatology products are good examples of pharmaceutical products that are specifically designed to help patients achieve better compliance.

Our product Zytopic for the treatment of [atopic dermatitis](#) is a good example. The active ingredient in Zytopic is

triamcinolone acetonide, which is an old steroid, but the way we designed the product is in the kit format.

The kit contains three components:-

1. A soap free cleanser to help remove dead skin and open up the pores
2. Zytopic, the active product
3. A long lasting moisturizer

In the case of atopic [dermatitis](#), there is a lot of itching and skin scratching and peeling so when using our kit, the patient will start by cleaning the affected skin with the soap free cleanser to remove dead skin and open up the pores, he will then follow with the active drug and with the skin clean and pores open, the drug will have a better chance of being more efficacious.

And finally, the patient will apply the long lasting moisturizer provided to keep the skin moist and help in reducing recurrence of itching episodes.

How do you find neglected opportunities in the pharmaceutical market?

Finding neglected opportunities is an acquired expertise that took me over a decade. One has to combine his medical and scientific training with the understanding of the unmet market needs and have an extensive rolodex of connections.

This is something I have been good at and it allowed me to find products throughout the companies I worked for and started.

What excites you the most about Innovus' product pipeline right now?

Innovus has built an impressive commercial pipeline in a very short period of time. I am excited about the fact that we have the product which will allow us to do commercial partnerships and start generating revenues for the company.

How strong is the market for these products predicted to be over the next 3-5 years?

Our products are for diseases in the [sexual dysfunction](#), dermatology, respiratory and inflammation/pain areas. Those are big markets and the number of patients is on the rise year after year.

What are Innovus' plans for the future?

Innovus' plans are very clear and focused. We are working towards commercial partnerships for our product to start generating revenues on a worldwide basis towards our main goal of listing the company on Nasdaq in 2014.

Where can readers find more information?

www.innovuspharma.com

About Dr. Bassam Damaj

Dr. Bassam Damaj was appointed to serve as Innovus' President & CEO on January 22, 2013.



Before joining Innovus Pharma, Dr. Damaj served as President & Chief Executive Officer of Apricus Biosciences, Inc., (NASDAQ: APRI) from December 2009 until November 2012.

At Apricus Bio, Dr. Damaj was responsible for the approval of its lead drug Vitaros, a treatment for [erectile dysfunction](#). Dr. Damaj also signed multimillion dollar partnerships between Apricus Bio and leading pharmaceutical companies such as Abbott, Novartis-Sandoz and Takeda.

At Apricus Bio, he successfully designed and executed on a business plan that resurrected the Company, its technology platform and its products, and grew the Company to over \$100M in market capitalization.

Before Apricus Bio, Dr. Damaj was a co-founder of Bio-Quant, Inc. and served as the Chief Executive Officer and Chief Scientific Officer and a Director of Bio-Quant's board of directors from its inception in June 2000 until its acquisition by Apricus Biosciences in June 2009.

In addition, Dr. Damaj was the founder, Chairman, President & Chief Executive Officer of R&D Healthcare, and the co-founder of Celltek Biotechnologies. He also served as a Director of the Board of Directors at CreAgri, Inc. and was Member of the Scientific Advisory Board of MicroIslet, Inc.

Dr. Damaj is the author of the *Immunological Reagents and Solutions* reference book, the inventor of many patents and author of numerous peer reviewed scientific publications.

Dr. Damaj won a U.S. Congressional award for the Anthrax Multiplex Diagnostic Test in 2003.

Dr. Damaj holds a Ph.D. degree in [Immunology](#)/Microbiology from Laval University and completed a postdoctoral fellowship in molecular [oncology](#) from McGill University School of Medicine.