

Press Release

## The triple challenge of digital in pharma

*Today, digital technologies are considered to be a chance for healthcare companies to reinvent the relationship with patients and healthcare professionals and capture business opportunities. Nevertheless, this redesign of exchanges between industrialists and environmental stakeholders has a strong impact on internal employees. ALCIMED, a consulting company specialized in innovation and new market development, analyses the three challenges facing patients, healthcare professionals and collaborators for pharmaceutical companies.*

*Paris, October 25th 2017 – At a time when digital has become completely integrated into our everyday habits, some sectors of activity have already evolved and adapted to the new modes of communication and interaction that have emerged from digital technology. This is particularly the case for players in the telecommunications, banking and retail sectors. The pharmaceutical industry is still lagging behind in terms of digital maturity compared to these areas. Nevertheless, and although some people still have reservations, the trend towards digitization is also true with regard to health. Patients' first reflex is now to type their symptoms into Google's search bar. In 2015, 76% of general practitioners said they used the Internet daily as part of their professional activity. However, digitization also suggests that laboratories need to change the way they communicate, impacting directly their internal employees.*

### ***Patients, priority targets of digital technology***

Despite the impossibility for an industrial player in the healthcare sector to communicate directly with patients, many initiatives based on digital technologies have been launched, a sign of a trend that is already well integrated within the laboratories. They are designed to provide information on pathologies, facilitate the use of a treatment, involve the patient in its management and ensure treatment follow-up. Additionally, they take very different forms, ranging from an informational website to a mobile application allowing exchanges between patients and doctors.

Already in 2007, Roche launched a blog, "femmesavanttout.com", designed to facilitate exchanges between women with breast cancer and provide them with moral support. This first initiative has evolved into a collaborative platform collecting patient testimonies on "lachainerose.fr".

Another example is the Daily Pso application, launched by Janssen in partnership with France Psoriasis for psoriasis patients. It enables patients to learn about their condition and facilitates their follow-up by offering a photo storage feature which patients can then take to show their doctor the progress of their skin rash.

Today, digital is above all integrated into the patient journey and used as a means of improving the quality of life of patients by offering "beyond-the-pill" services. Almost all laboratories are now using digital technology for patients. The challenge is to identify the patient's real needs and to choose the most appropriate channel according to their profile.

### ***The digitalization of the relationship with healthcare professionals in progress***

Healthcare professionals are not immune to the current trends and digital tools. Although the relationship between industry and doctors is highly regulated, particularly with regard to the type of information that can be communicated depending on the channel used, laboratories tend to use digital technology to get closer to prescribers. Gradually, they are moving away from the historical face-to-face format towards a multi-channel approach.

Today, manufacturers rely on a variety of channels to communicate with prescribers, whether through e-mails, websites, social networks, web conferences or applications for healthcare professionals. The first three are the most common, with social networks being used to communicate on environmental information only and not specifically on products.

# Alcimed

The official company accounts of Pfizer and Novartis each have more than 200,000<sup>i</sup> followers, not necessarily all physicians, which nevertheless demonstrates their distribution reach and brand loyalty.

Merck is now a bridgehead in its use of digital technology for healthcare professionals. In addition to having the most famous medical information and training web portal in France, *Univadis*, the company also offers a website dedicated to facilitating interactions between doctors and themselves, *MSD Connect*. And to go even further, Merck has developed *Comuniti*, a social network entirely dedicated to healthcare professionals.

## ***Digitization, a human challenge above all within pharmaceutical companies***

Within pharmaceutical companies, the challenge of digitizing the relationship with patients and healthcare professionals is mainly human rather than technological, as the use of digital channels and tools has a strong impact on employees. Business processes are evolving, digital technology is drastically shortening the time-spans of these processes, and the expected skills are changing. This is true for all departments, marketing, communication, IT, market access, but also for production and medical regulations.

But digital is still too often perceived as an end in itself and not as a means to achieve a shared objective. In short, the many initiatives already implemented for patients and healthcare professionals do not necessarily fit into a global approach of optimizing performance and improving the brand image of healthcare industry players.

Lambert Lacoste, Alcimed's project manager, concludes that it is "*necessary that a vision of digitalization of the organization be supported by top management, in order to define a clear direction towards which any digital initiative must aim, so that we also support employees in the evolution of their profession*".

## **About ALCIMED - [www.alcimed.com](http://www.alcimed.com)**

Founded in 1993, Alcimed is an Innovation and New Business Consulting firm specialized in sectors driven by innovation: life sciences (food, biotech, healthcare), energy, environment, aeronautics, chemicals, cosmetics, materials, building, transportation, space and defense. Our purpose is to help both private and public decision-makers exploring and developing uncharted territories, dealing with new technologies, new offers, new geographies, possible futures, and new ways to innovate. Alcimed's clients are: industrial leaders, start-ups, SMEs, major companies, private equity players and public institutions. Alcimed's team is made up of 200 highly-skilled, multicultural, passionate individuals with a double culture in science/technology and business. ALCIMED is headquartered in Paris and has offices in Lyon and Toulouse in France, in Germany, Belgium, Switzerland, the UK, the USA and in Singapore.

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<sup>i</sup> Twitter, October 2017