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Electronic wearable injector a reality

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Electronic wearable injector a reality



West's leadership team comprising Ms Karen Flynn and Mr Warwick Bedwell was recently on a business trip to Hyderabad, India.

Ms Flynn is West's SVP & CCO, and oversees the company's new global commercial team that includes marketing, sales and contract manufacturing services, and as well as technical customer support for West's full portfolio of offerings.

Mr Bedwell serves as VP & MD for West's Asia-Pacific (APAC) region.

Ms Flynn revealed that the company is developing new product offerings in the area of generics, having features that will interest generics companies.

"We are inculcating some changes in our commercial strategies to become more oriented to various markets we serve. There is a lot of customer similarities around the world in terms of quality standards and wanting reliable supplies. However, there are uniqueness with respect to customer needs. We align ourselves to the market, and get better understanding of the unique market needs, and bring new products and new services specific to the segments," commented Ms Flynn.

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Crucial Indian Market

West's key global market segments include biologics, pharmaceuticals and generics.

Mr Bedwell added that India is a key market for the company. "India is important for us not just in the APAC region but globally. We have recognized India's advantage. We are here for the last 10 to 15 years. Our plant in Sri City, Chennai, is close to two years old now, and has been highly successful, catering to India and exports," he said.

The facility was completed in 2014 with a cost of $15 million to produce seals used in primary packaging of injectable medicines.

In terms of volumes, West expects to touch 1.9 billion pieces by 2019-20 at this facility.

As a Chief Commercial Officer, Ms Flynn noted that the visibility of needs in India is not as same as in the Western markets.

"There is increase in the regulatory enforcements by USFDA. The quality standards are rising here in the local markets. More and more customers are looking to West for primary packaging components that are pre-washed and pre-sterilized," she expressed.

Patient Engagement Trends

Globally, patients today are increasingly seen to be wanting to manage their health and well-being themselves.

"This is enabled through smart devices that can help them to understand what their sugar levels are, for example, along with medication reminders and controlling of medicine intake. This is addressed through our delivery devices which are electronically connected. For this we have partnered with HealthPrize," Ms Flynn stated.

This strategic collaboration was announced in September 2015.

HealthPrize is a US-based digital health company in patient engagement and medication adherence solutions.

The companies intend to integrate HealthPrize's Software-as-a-Service (SaaS) medication adherence and patient-engagement platform with West's injectable drug delivery systems to provide an end-to-end connected health solution for pharmaceutical companies and patients.

West's press release pointed that the combined offering will provide voluntary, electronically-connected drug delivery systems that can track when patients take their medications.

HealthPrize's system is also said to engage and educate patients to increase medication adherence and medical literacy, rewarding interaction (gaming theory rewarding system), and stick to prescribed treatment plans leading to favorable outcomes.

Trend is also catching up in wanting consistent quality products with fewer side effects, treating patients at home and outside of clinical settings, with wearables becoming more important and delivery systems enabling patients to live a normal life.

"Efficient use of the medium is a global trend, and producing products that are more efficient. Producing these products encounter higher costs especially in APAC. Products today are made to fit for purpose when it comes to emerging domestic markets," Ms Flynn opined.

Mr Bedwell observed that there is more innovation happening with customers in their applications to reduce costs.

"There are looking for smaller footprints in manufacturing and flexible manufacturing systems," he remarked.

Crystal Zenith

In 2015, West came up with its product Daikyo Crystal Zenith (CZ) in collaboration with its Japanese partner Daikyo Seiko.

Crystal Zenith is made of Cyclic Olefin Polymer (CoP) containment and delivery system designed as a high-performance alternative to glass.

It is said to be more inert than glass, and solves issues dealing with traditional glass as in breakages, delamination, protein aggregation, or certain reactions.

At the moment, 22 to 30 companies in India have used Crystal Zenith.

Annually, 2% of West's global sales revenues go into its R&D.

"All our R&D happens in our centers located in the US, Europe and Singapore," Mr Bedwell told *BioSpectrum*.

First Gen Wearable Injector

Ms Flynn mentioned that West is doing a lot of work in the devices space and primary packaging portfolio.

"We are getting ready to commercialize an electronic wearable injector this July," she pointed.

This is said to be the first generation electronic wearable injector, and its 8 different embodiments are currently under development.

The device, according to the company, has been tested on humans and has undergone clinical trials.

Globally, today about 2400 drugs are in development at critical stages.
West intends to strengthen its understanding in drug products and primary packaging compatibility.

"We want to concentrate and focus on the injectable pharma space, and it is a growing market. The market is large. We have more opportunities in this space to expand. We look for technological opportunities and geographical expansion," Ms Flynn shared.

In 2014, West Pharma's Pharmaceutical Packaging Systems business recoded revenues of $1 billion. Its Pharmaceutical Delivery Systems business saw $402 million in revenues.

(The writer was flown to Hyderabad, India, by West Pharma to meet its leadership team)