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IQVIA Consumer Health: Brands Can Beat Inflation, But Only If OTC Firms Raise Their Game

by [David Ridley](#)

Investments in digitalization, real world evidence and Rx-to-OTC switch can all help OTC companies thrive in a difficult global economic environment, argue IQVIA Consumer Health experts in a recent webinar.

Consumer health brands can weather, even benefit from, inflationary pressures, if manufacturers put their weight behind them, says IQVIA Consumer Health.

Investments in digitalization, real world evidence and Rx-to-OTC switch can all help firms ride out the current economic turbulence, IQVIA CH advised in a recent webinar.

Despite the ongoing impact of the global COVID-19 pandemic, IQVIA CH found that the world's top-10 consumer health brands fared "extremely well" in 2021.

Johnson & Johnson Consumer Health's Tylenol analgesic and Zyrtec allergy brands, Pharmavite's Nature Made line of vitamins and minerals, and Procter & Gamble's Vicks and Reckitt's Mucinex cough, cold and flu ranges all grew at double-digit rates globally last year.

GlaxoSmithKline Consumer Healthcare's Voltaren and Panadol pain relief brands and Sanofi Consumer Healthcare's Doliprane analgesic were not far behind, all growing at high single-digit rates in 2021.

"Over the last two years of COVID, what jumps out is that consumers trusted their favorite brands, with all the top-10 brands by market share doing extremely well," commented IQVIA CH's Amit Shukla.

There are several reasons for this, explained Shukla, who is IQVIA CH's global vice-president,

consulting services.

“But most crucial is that consumers were not willing to experiment during uncertain times,” he continued. “They wished for the security and comfort of their trusted brands.”

Rethink Innovation Strategies

With the macro-economic turbulence of COVID now being compounded by the war in Ukraine, driving up consumer prices and supply chain costs, this brand trust is even more important today, he suggested.

“For stronger consumer healthcare brands, inflation presents an opportunity to take price increases and invest it back in brand building,” he argued.

However, companies can't rely on the “well-oiled innovation machine” of the past, for example via line extensions featuring new formulation offerings and packaging changes, warned Shukla's colleague, Volker Spitzer.

The OTC product shelf is now very crowded, making it very difficult to differentiate brands from the competition with such traditional approaches, pointed out Volker, who is IQVIA CH's senior director, global consumer health R&D services.

The traditional innovation machine is also “out of sync” with today's “fast evolving and technology driven world,” he noted. Consumer needs and expectations have “changed drastically,” he said.

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“We are now in a kind of democratized world where the consumers are not only the buyer of products but also strongly contribute to the validation of the value of a product through e-commerce rating systems, for example.”

Three Forms of Innovation

Global Consumer Health Market Will Emerge Out Of Pandemic Stronger Than Ever

By [David Ridley](#)

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Delta and Omicron variants of the coronavirus slowed the global consumer health market's return to normal in 2021. However, the resurgence of the cough and cold category, the continuing popularity of e-commerce and digital health, as well as the increasing appeal of self-care to cash-strapped governments all point to a “stronger and more sustained” bounce-back in 2022, according to IQVIA...

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For Spitzer, true innovation comes in three forms. Firstly, in generating new evidence to support marketing that resonates with consumer needs or the extension of indications into new areas.

Secondly, in creating new products, for example via Rx-to-OTC switch. And thirdly, offering holistic solutions to consumer health needs by integrating digital health tools, personalization and diagnostics with existing OTC products and brands.

With regards to generating new evidence, traditionally, this was done through investing in expensive clinical trials, he noted. Today, however, real world data can produce more relevant evidence as it is based on actual consumer use.

Spitzer drew on an example of an IQVIA CH client that wanted to support their skin health brand by generating consumer claims related to consumer recovery.

“They wanted to understand how satisfied consumers are with regular usage of the product and at which level they appreciated a simple yet effective solution for their skin infection,” he explained.

To this end, IQVIA CH recruited 500 participants and product users for a retrospective real-world survey study.

“The results confirmed the high satisfaction with regular usage of their product also around effectiveness and moreover consumer trust,” he said. “This was translated in meaningful claims allowing a better product differentiation in the market.”

New app-based consumer health technologies suggest ways in which real world data could be used in the future to generate new claims, he continued.

Spitzer pointed to cough tracking app Hyfe, for example, which uses “artificial intelligence” to measure the frequency of cough events by filtering cough specific noise signals out of the general audio noise.

“We have many OTC cough products on the market, and I think a study applying such a technology would be helpful to prove how such a medicine is reducing the cough frequency over time,” he speculated.

“This is a very objective outcome,” he added, “and I would imagine that a fresh claim in this direction would resonate with consumers.”

Artificial Intelligence In Consumer Health: Reality, Challenge And Opportunity

By [David Ridley](#)

The other example is sleep tracking apps. “There are many ailments such as allergies, cough/cold, pain and so on that have a negative impact on sleep,” he explained. “Many of the OTC products in this direction certainly help consumers to sleep better when suffering under such conditions.”

“So why not develop scientific evidence in this direction and use digital sleep tracker for developing such objective endpoints?” he asked.

Complex Switches

Moving on to Rx-to-OTC reclassification, Spitzer said that “we are now seeing a trend to more complex switches, pushing the self-care boundaries.”

The recent switch of two identical progestogen-only contraceptive pills from HRA Pharma (Hana) and Maxwellia (Lovima, both 75mcg desogestrel film-coated tablets) in the UK is a great example, he noted. (Also see "[HRA Pharma And Maxwellia To Launch The UK's First OTC Daily Contraceptives](#)" - HBW Insight, 9 Jul, 2021.)

Complex switches such as these require evidence that consumers can safely self-select and use such medicines, Spitzer pointed out.

Digital tools such as explanatory videos, telemedicine and diagnostic algorithms can all have a “tremendous impact” in showing this, he continued.

Volker notes a recent study by AstraZeneca using an online tool to show that US consumers could appropriately self-select the firm's Crestor statin. (Also see "[In AstraZeneca-Sponsored Study, Digital App Corrects OTC Statin Self-Selection Problem](#)" - HBW Insight, 27 Oct, 2021.)

The study could be a bellwether for switch

05 Apr 2022

Are self-care apps and digital health wearables touted as powered by AI actually "intelligent"? Currently, no. However, they could be in the future, if regulators can come up with frameworks flexible enough to keep up with adaptive algorithms and machine learning. This article looks at some of the key regulatory issues facing this fast-growing and exciting consumer health market.

[Read the full article here](#)

Are Rx-To-OTC Switches Worth The Trouble? Yes They Are, IQVIA Data Shows

By [David Ridley](#)

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The holy grail of consumer health innovation, Rx-to-OTC switches, are costly and hard to pull off. So, are they worth the effort? An analysis by IQVIA of desloratadine, which was switched in Germany 2020 by Novartis

applications in the US for other types of drugs for chronic health conditions which have remained Rx-only largely due to concerns that consumers won't accurately determine, based only on information in OTC Drug Facts labels, whether they should use a drug.

subsidiary, Hexal, shows that they are, with sales of OTC desloratadine products growing 112% between 2019 and 2020.

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The US Food and Drug Administration's is now proposing a "Nonprescription Drug Product with an Additional Condition for Nonprescription Use" rule that may help such evidence to be used in future switches.

It focuses entirely on deploying digital channels consumers would use to determine if they should use a drug and, if they do, a barcoded voucher indicating they can buy the product in a store or on a website. (Also see "[Proposed OTC Switch Rule Anticipates Digital World](#)" - HBW Insight, 29 Jun, 2022.)

At-Home Testing

Finally, turning to holistic solutions, Spitzer noted that treatment approaches have been getting much more precise and personalized thanks to "very sophisticated diagnostics and related treatment strategies."

In the area of nutrition, for example, personalization – which has been a topic for discussion for more than 20 years – is now becoming a reality, he said, thanks to diagnostic tools that can be based on lab data collected at home or digital health tools.

"The idea is to connect biological and also behavior information from individuals with more effective and individualized health and wellness solutions.," Spitzer explained.

Examples include Bloom Diagnostics' at-home lab that can quantify analyte concentrations in the blood, and into which a variety of tests for ferritin, thyroid function and ovarian reserves can be inserted. (Also see "[Digital Home-Testing Is The Future, Says Bloom Diagnostics Co-Founder Angelica Kohlmann](#)" - HBW Insight, 30 Jun, 2022.)

HBW Insight's Key Takeaways From 2021: #3 Keep Your Eye On AI

By [David Ridley](#)

05 Apr 2022

The future of digital health will be shaped more than anything else by the rise of artificial intelligence. From body enhancing bio-wearables to camera-based skin diagnostics, the consumer health industry continued to explore the possibilities

London-based Atlas Biomed also wants to bring together not just genetic and microbiome data from its direct-to-consumer tests but also lifestyle data from questionnaires and wearables “into one single puzzle,” its CEO Sergey Musienko told us in 2020. (Also see “[Direct-To-Consumer Tests Opening The Door To Personalized Medicine](#)” - HBW Insight, 16 Jan, 2020.)

presented by AI in 2021. However, there are many regulatory and ethical hurdles industry must overcome as we move into 2022 and beyond.

[Read the full article here](#)

In consumer health, the best example of this kind of approach is J&J’s Nicorette QuickMist SmartTrack app-supported smoking cessation product, Spitzer argued.

Described by J&J as “the world’s first connected OTC medicine,” the product combines the company’s nicotine spray delivery system with trackable digital health app technology, leveraging the power of personalization to help “provide motivation and encouragement to quit smoking for good.”

Combining digital technology with the latest insights from behavioral science, the product offers consumers a personalized quit plan of “achievable milestones” providing a way of monitoring and visualizing progression, explained Bill Twomey, senior director for J&J’s Global Smoking Cessation franchise, in an exclusive interview with HBW Insight. (Also see “[J&J’s Nicorette QuickMist SmartTrack – Getting Inside One Of 2020’s Biggest UK Launches](#)” - HBW Insight, 24 Feb, 2021.)

Integrated Self-Care

In summary, Spitzer said that firms need innovative R&D approaches to develop their OTC brands successfully today.

“To support consumers better and improve their health outcomes we need to target an integrated self-care setting bringing together the physical products and the digital world,” he insisted.

Companies should capitalize on emerging health and wellness trends such as pre-, pro- and post-biotics, a desire for prevention and immunity boosting health products and concern for cognitive and mental well-being.

“All this needs to be connected to the digital world, including artificial intelligence, machine learning and augmented and virtual reality,” he concluded.