

## **SELF-MEDICATION : Afipa is launching a new approach to better support the development of self-medication in France**

*As this year's market results are being published, Afipa presents its 2019 strategic approach articulated around 3 pillars: dialogue and responsibility, co-construction of a pharmaceutical healthcare process and promotion of the benefits related to self-medication.*

### **A STABLE YEAR MARKED BY STRUCTURAL CHANGES**

For the first time in 5 years, there is a pause in the progression of selfcare. The performances of food supplements (+8.4% in value) and medical devices (+2.8%) cannot balance the decrease in self-medication (-4.6%).

This situation is partly due to the re-switching of certain medicines, the structural decline in the number of customers in pharmacies and the shift of the flu episode to early in the year (for a longer but less intense episode).

*"In parallel, the selfcare market is facing long-term evolutions, such as new consumer trends increasingly focused on natural products, the fragmentation of the pharmaceutical network and the development of larger pharmacies resulting in market concentration. These changes are disrupting the established model"* underlines Franck Leyze, President of Afipa.

### **SOME OBSTACLES TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF SELF-MEDICATION REMAIN...**

*"When we compare ourselves with other European countries, we note that self-medication is insufficiently valued in France. I know from my experience abroad, in particular in Asia – where prevention is an integral part of the healthcare approach - how beneficial such a strategy is. We must change the situation!"* indicates Franck Leyze.

The French situation is due to a certain number of cultural, political and organisational obstacles which self-medication must overcome. In addition to these structural reasons, there are also concerns regarding the misuse of medicines and their side effects.

*"We are fully aware of the fact that ensuring a safe, sustainable development of self-medication requires that we, as industrials and key players of the healthcare system, take into account and answer these concerns"* continues Franck Leyze.

### **... BUT THERE ARE NEW OPPORTUNITIES TO SEIZE**

In spite this complex environment, several positive signals show that there is an opportunity for a larger-scale use of supervised self-medication:

- **the evolving behaviours of the French people** who want to be fully involved in their own healthcare and who demand more accessibility and proximity.
- **the demographic and organisational challenges** which require that the healthcare process be reorganised. The decreasing medical demography over the past years – since 2010, the

number of doctors with a regular medical practice has decreased by 10%<sup>1</sup> – requires that the healthcare process be re-thought in order to provide a proper balance between the healthcare demand and offer.

- Within this **reorganisation of the healthcare process**, the increased role of the pharmacist as support to the patients. The flu-vaccination experiment and the pharmacists' participation in healthcare coordination show that the pharmacists' missions are developing beyond the delivery of medicinal products.

The development of self-medication is a perfectly relevant answer to this new context.

### **2019: AFIPA IS LAUNCHING A NEW STRATEGIC APPROACH**

In this context, Afipa is launching a constructive discussion with all stakeholders in order to support the development of self-medication. To achieve this goal, we are implementing a strategic approach articulated around 3 pillars:

#### **1) Conduct a constructive, responsible dialogue with the healthcare authorities.**

In order to ensure the development of self-medication, the industrials must be in a position to provide clear, precise, factual information on products; they must also answer the questions and meet the expectations of the authorities, healthcare professionals and general public. Implementing this safe approach requires establishing best practices.

These best practices will comprise a series of measures, in particular focused on reducing the risk of misuse. To meet this objective, Afipa will propose a specific misuse-detection methodology and an improved follow-up for certain sensitive molecules. In addition, Afipa is considering a specific general public communication operation on this topic.

Final measure regarding best practices: we will increase awareness regarding the benefits and challenges of self-medication via specific training modules for the marketing and commercial functions of Afipa's members.

#### **2) Co-build a model for a safe pharmaceutical healthcare process**, including advice and reinforced patient support in pharmacies, in order to back up the evolving role of healthcare professionals, in particular pharmacists.

This project includes the launch of a specific process aimed at answering the interrogations and concerns regarding the use of certain OTC products which require more complete information and support, while paving the way for a broader reflection on certain pathologies and molecules for which a systematic medical prescription does not seem mandatory.

This pharmaceutical healthcare process will consist in a specific protocol regarding the delivery of self-medication medicines (decision trees regarding the instructions for over-the-counter delivery, mandatory registration in the pharmaceutical record).

As the pharmacist is increasingly acting as proximity healthcare contact, this process will contribute to a better recognition of his advice.

#### **3) Demonstrate the benefits of self-medication by communicating on its efficiency** and on the therapeutic benefits of self-medication medicines as well as their societal benefits.

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<sup>1</sup> Conseil national de l'Ordre des médecins. Atlas de la démographie médicale en France. National Medical Council. Atlas of medical demography in France. January 2018

Indeed, self-medication plays a major role in dealing with minor health issues which do not require a medical consultation; in many situations, it is the first step of the patients' healthcare process.

*“At the beginning of my mandate as president, I had set as my objective to reinforce the responsible, safe use of our products, and that means involving all members of the healthcare process: industrials, authorities, healthcare professionals and the patients themselves. Our strategic approach aims to make this dialogue stronger and more constructive.*

*We are pursuing our engagement to promote a model based on quality, security and efficiency. We want to support the evolving healthcare behaviours, in other words, the desire to be fully involved in one's own healthcare. For minor healthcare issues which do not require a medical consultation, self-medication, supported by information and relevant advice, provides an optimised access to healthcare with the benefit of advice from the pharmacist - who is often the primary healthcare contact for French patients.*

*The benefit for the general practitioner is that he or she can focus on situations which require a medical consultation. We know that 63% of the GP's consider that the development of self-medication would enable them to focus on more serious pathologies and 59% believe that this would reduce congestion in their waiting rooms<sup>2</sup>.*

*Our project creates the foundation for closer cooperation between pharmacists and doctors, to lead to an optimised balance of roles in the patients' healthcare process” states Franck Leyze.*

Afipa is the professional federation representing the companies which produce and commercialise healthcare products available over the counter in pharmacies (self-medication medicines, medical devices and food supplements).

Consult Afipa on: [www.afipa.org](http://www.afipa.org) - [www.masantemonchoix.org](http://www.masantemonchoix.org) - Twitter: @afipa

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<sup>2</sup> Afipa. « Les Français, les médecins généralistes et l'automédication responsable » The French people, the General Practitioners and Responsible Self-Medication, Ipsos survey for Afipa - December 2015.