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How pharma companies like Novo Nordisk are finding success by reaching out to existing patient communities instead of building their own. Plus the latest DTP trends

GROUP THERAPY

Rachael Lewinson of Juvenation.org (front) with Susan Rago and Jim Shehan of Novo Nordisk

Update

Palio formalized its partnership with Zemoga, an interactive shop, and launched a blog: Pixels and Pills (www.pixelsandpills.com). The blog's stated mission is to use the site as a "platform for dialogue, insight and idea sharing" around the topics of technology and communications. The blog's contributors are DJ Edgerton, Sven Larsen and Russ Ward of Zemoga, and Dan Licht and Guy Mastrion of Palio.

In order to increase its global outreach, MicroMass joined Worldwide Partners, Inc. (WPI), an international network of independent agencies. WPI consists of 94 agencies and services clients in 54 countries. The network contains only two US pharmaceutical agencies, according to a statement. Based in Denver, Colorado, WPI generates over \$4.1 billion in capitalized billings, the statement said.

Merkle promoted

Pete Mehr from VP and



client team leader to chief strategy officer for the agency's

healthcare marketing practice, which launched earlier this year. He will oversee the execution of physician relationship marketing programs, consumer/patient relationship programs and market research initiatives for Merkle's clients, according to a statement.

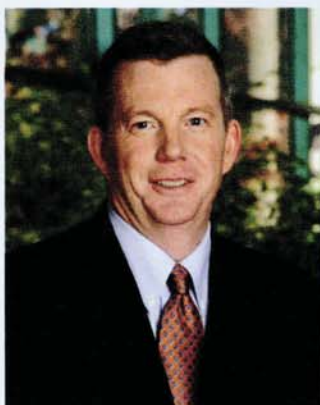
Ferguson opens OTC specialty shop

FERGUSON, A CommonHealth professional shop, launched a new "OTC Center of Excellence" focused on OTC marketing and promotion.

The group, led by EVP, director of client services Brian Doherty, will focus specifically on prescription drugs that transition to OTC, although the agency will also work on traditional OTC brands.

According to Doherty, who has been at CommonHealth for over a decade, the decision to launch an OTC group is a reflection of an evolving healthcare system. "Physicians aren't going to be able to devote as much time to 'minor' conditions," said Doherty, adding that self-care is on the rise. As a result, brand managers have to not only consider their share of the pharmacy shelf, but also their share of healthcare more generally, he said.

Doherty said Ferguson will



Doherty: focus will be on Rx drugs transitioning to OTC

bring its professional marketing experience to bear on OTC products. Although OTCs are governed by less strenuous marketing regulations than prescription drugs, "there are more similarities than differences," said Doherty. "They still have to go through [internal] medical review."

The OTC group will handle promotions for two of its pre-existing clients—Novartis' line of consumer OTC products and Johnson & Johnson's oral and upper respiratory OTCs. Doherty said Ferguson worked on two of the most successful Rx-to-OTC transitions in history—presumably Zyrtec and Prevacid for J&J and Novartis, respectively—though Doherty refused to confirm specific brands.

The top nine out of 10 OTC brands switched from Rx to OTC, and one-third of OTC products overall contain an ingredient that was available by prescription-only at one time, said Doherty. "Work begins two or three years prior to patent expiration, and we continue to be in the brand creation business." OTC products get a new label, and that's really where a brand begins, said Doherty.

—Ben Comer

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 - Introduction to the 10 Steps of the Campaign (07/07/2009)
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ATKINS INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATES (AIA) launched a new website for marketers wanting to speak the right language, no matter where they are. AIA uses translators working from within a campaign's target country, to help position brands within a precise cultural context, said Molly Naughton, vice president at AIA. In addition to language services, the agency provides global imaging, layout and other offerings at a price below what larger agencies charge to create international versions of their creative, she said. —BC

Spectrum hires two in DC office

SPECTRUM, A founding partner of GlobalHealthPR, an international communications network, added two new employees at its Washington DC headquarters.

Michael Cover was hired as SVP and practice leader for disease management, and Kevin Walsh was hired as VP of digital strategy.

Cover, formerly SVP at Ogilvy Public Relations Worldwide, has handled federal contracts for the CDC and HHS, among others, and is tasked with the development of communications platforms focused on the spread and containment of diseases.

Walsh was previously director for online strategy at LensWorld.com. —BC