

The science of pharmaceutical cannabis

The growing acceptance of medical cannabis in more countries is good news for publicly traded pharmaceutical company Panaxia Labs Israel, which aims to become a leading player in this market. The company recently signed a major distribution deal in Germany with Neuraxpharm, a leading European specialty pharmaceutical company focused on the treatment of central nervous system disorders. As part of the Segal Pharma Group, Panaxia is the largest manufacturer of medical cannabis products in Israel. "Our ambition is to initially realise our business potential in sales in Europe's largest markets," says Assi Rotbart, International GM at Panaxia.

Mr. Rotbart stresses that Panaxia is a pharmaceutical company that focuses uniquely on the development and GMP manufacture of cannabis for medical applications. Cannabis is classified as a botanical drug, as confirmed by a US FDA ruling in December 2016.

As a pharmaceutical company, Panaxia follows the exact same scientific approach as any conventional pharmaceutical company, both in drug development and manufacturing. But while this goes without saying, in Mr. Rotbart's view, Panaxia does have a unique approach to standardization, consistency, and accuracy of dosage, all factors that are perceived as potentially problematic when processing plant-based ingredients. "All we care about is the molecular composition of the plant, in other words we focus on what is going on inside the plant. By using the most advanced analytical and validation methods, we are also focused on

developing dosage forms that deliver the same amount of active ingredients to patients time after time."

Cannabis contains over 140 chemicals that interact with receptors throughout the body, and uniquely, Panaxia has identified 20 of those chemicals; most pharmaceutical cannabis companies are working with just three or four, according to Mr. Rotbart. Having identified those 20 chemicals inside the plant, Panaxia can manipulate them according to customer specifications. "We extract the molecules we want to work with," Mr. Rotbart explains.

Mr. Rotbart highlights that Panaxia plans to make high-CBD medicines available to patients suffering from epilepsy or autism spectrum disorder (ASD), many of whom are children. "We can't cure autism but we can alleviate symptoms, such as the severe nightmares that children with autism often have to endure," Mr. Rotbart adds. "We're very

proud of this as conventional autism medication has really bad side effects; it can make children drowsy, for example. Trials with a 71% success rate indicate that our products are far superior."

Panaxia is confident that the market for medical cannabis will soon mature. Encouraging news in that regard is its partnership with Neuraxpharm, a leading European specialty pharmaceutical company, for the manufacture, commercialization and distribution of advanced medical cannabis products in Germany, Europe's largest and fastest-growing medical cannabis market. The agreement is expected to cover more markets in the future. "One of our biggest challenges is to convince physicians of the benefits of pharmaceutical cannabis," says Mr. Rotbart. "We have to share the vast bulk of solid clinical data we've built over the years with the medical world to create confidence. But we can see that change is already happening."

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