

How a Prescription Medical Device Disrupted the Chronic Pain Pill Market - Strategies for Pharma to Take Note of and Potential Opportunities to Explore

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In January of 2022, Israel-based migraine device developer, Theranica, published the most extensive real-world study of a migraine device ever conducted.

Over 19 months, 23,000 treatments of the Nerivio system were provided to migraine sufferers. Results were successful, with over 65% of chronic and acute patients continuing to experience pain relief hours after treatment.

In 80% of the cases, patients did not take any medications, compared to the 20% that opted for co-treatment methods (device + drugs).

Throughout the US, co-treatment regimes have become famous for chronic, difficult-to-treat conditions like migraine. Also popular? Medication abuse from a lack of immediate results.

Across conditions, online chronic pain patient communities are filled with individuals sharing their own success stories with mixes of OTC and prescribed treatments. Determining the proper regime is often trial and error, encompassing everything from drugs to natural remedies.

The pharmaceutical industry has faced heightened criticism over the years due to the opioid addiction crisis, driving the usage of drug-free alternatives.

Medical devices like Nerivio can be considered a competitor for pharmaceutical companies.

However, they can also prove to be potential collaborators.

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Background: Theranica's Rapid, Awareness Driving Efforts Around FDA Clearance

In 2019, Theranica catapulted into the US market after receiving the FDA De Novo Clearance for their wearable migraine device. Nerivio focussed on leveraging non-invasive remote electrical neuromodulation (REN) to inhibit pain.

The strategy for landing on the industry's radar worked. To secure national coverage, Theranica built a foundation of coverage in local, more accessible markets. From CBS Arizona network to ABC Maryland, reporters covered the news of Nerivio's US launch.

A few months later, Nerivio was named in TIME's 100 Best Inventions of 2019. An application must be submitted to earn a spot on this coveted list. However, nominations are driven by trusted media editors and correspondents.

National news outlets and industry thought leaders could only target those with preexisting US relevance. Building a coverage foundation in local, more accessible markets helped lead to this designation.

Beyond TIME Magazine, Nerivio was featured in major consumer outlets, including The New York Times, Vogue, NBC, and Good Morning America. Media efforts were combined with patient community-building strategies to maximize results in the long term.

Current Success Methods: Nerivio's Strong Patient Following and Partners

Nerivio has built a strong patient community utilizing strategies to accelerate initial adoption. To educate end-users about their technology, Nerivio has formed relationships with patient-focused advocacy groups and influencers to promote their product online among migraine sufferers.

Players in the medical sphere should always consider where sufferers are getting information from beyond their doctors. Word of mouth spreads fast in chronic pain groups, with patients sharing updates on what best helps them. Patients can see doctors once a year but can engage with a community online multiple times daily. The level of potential influence here is tremendous. Theranica recognized this early on.

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The company's sphere of influence within patient groups has also been accelerated by partnerships. Currently, the United States Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) fully covers Nerivio as a part of their benefits. The VA is the nation's most extensive integrated healthcare system, serving more than 9M veteran patients.

Theranica makes it easy for veterans to order the device, providing a step-by-step landing page of instructions for receiving Nerivio from providers.

Beyond veterans, it is also simple for the everyday patient to receive a Nerivio prescription, thanks to Theranica's partnership with the telemedicine platform, UpScript. Leveraging an online, self-service portal, users can quickly connect with a migraine specialist via an online appointment. These appointments are offered at a discounted rate, a one-time \$20 fee (lower than the average copay at some doctor's offices).

Patients can learn about the device in three steps, connect with a specialist to discuss the correct protocol, and receive a prescription. Theranica has taken the often complex, lengthy process of seeking new treatments and transformed it into a consumer-friendly digital one.

Theranica currently has \$5M in revenue, demonstrating the success of its patient-oriented efforts over the last few years.

Key Takeaways for Pharmaceutical Companies

Around the world, biotechnology researchers are partnering with medical device developers to increase the efficiency of their studies. For instance, last year, researchers from the University of Limerick's University Hospital announced a collaboration with Dell Technologies and local New Jersey Medtech developer Becton Dickinson to improve the results of their cancer treatment.

The same can be done for patients seeking to improve the results of their current medication-based treatment regimes.

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The potential opportunity for co-treatment collaborations between pharma and Medtech players in the consumer market is seemingly inevitable as devices like Nerivio continue to enter the sphere.

The demand in the market is apparent. Patients are already leveraging a combination of prescription drugs and devices on their own. It is up to pharmaceutical companies to decide how to respond.

- Content by the BDMT Global Team

If you are interested in potential partnerships and long-term relationships with the companies mentioned in this article or others in the U.S. and/or S. Korea, contact Suzy at sim@bdmtglobal.com.

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As the head of BDMT Global in Boston, Im focuses on accelerating the innovative transformation of global companies. She is a Professor of Marketing and a member of the Advisory Board at Emerson College. Im is also co-founder of Sponsors of the Future, a non-profit organization that leads corporate social responsibility, promoting neurodiversity and inclusion. As a well-known business developer and marketing strategist in the global field for over 20 years, Im merged the two critical global business functions of Business Development (BD) and Marketing Transformation (MT) for the first time. She was recognized for her innovative business model and contribution and received five consecutive awards in the U.S. including the North American Business Awards and TITAN Business Award 2022 in Biotechnology.

