

A VIEW FROM THE TOP

Interview with Bill Humphries, Executive Vice President (Dermatology) of Ortho Dermatologics

ABSTRACT

Each issue, as part of our new “A View from the Top” segment, we will be sitting down with a leader in the field of dermatology or in industry to discuss current trends in the specialty and pertinent challenges faced by physicians and patients.

In this first edition of “A View from the Top,” we speak with Bill Humphries, Executive Vice President of Ortho Dermatologics. Mr. Humphries offers insight into the current state of the specialty, the future direction of dermatology, the challenges of treating patients with chronic skin diseases, and how physician-industry collaboration can be utilized to improve patient access to medications. Mr. Humphries also provides words of advice for young physicians entering the specialty.

Question: Where do you think the field of dermatology is going and what needs to be done?

Humphries: I see previously underserved markets like psoriasis and atopic dermatitis being addressed by new and innovative medicines which improve patients' lives. I see a continued commitment by large and small companies to improve current therapies and also advance treatment for unmet needs. The solo practitioner dermatologist that I grew up with in this industry is long gone - we now see multi-physician groups, physician extenders and affiliations amongst the providers. Patients are more educated and engaged in their treatment, creating a robust dialogue in the office. Aesthetic treatments are continuously expanding and driving patient foot traffic - this market is now hyper-competitive and the cash pay component is a driver for all parties. Last but not least is the payer environment; dermatological medications are on the radar screen of the payers and the challenge of patients getting the brand that is prescribed for them a significant hurdle.

On the horizon, I see the need for change in how patients and physicians have a predictable experience when it comes to brands that are prescribed. The status quo is not sustainable and in order to serve the specialty and the patients, this issue must be addressed. I see aesthetics continuing to grow, driven by patient desire, innovation and companies like Allergan growing the markets. Finally, I see significant innovation for medical dermatology and some of the unmet needs we have addressed with meaningful therapies for the patients who are suffering.

Question: What are the challenges that are pertinent to patients with chronic skin diseases?

Humphries: It's just that – these skin diseases are chronic and without a cure. Getting patients to disease free days is the key and a drive to metrics like PASI 100, completely clear, is the new goal not only for psoriasis but for all skin diseases. Yes, the goal is always to calm and treat but it is also to get to a cure.

Question: What are some of the current unmet needs within the field of dermatology?

Humphries: There are some obvious ones, like warts, hair and nails in terms of diseases. However, right now the biggest unmet need in my mind is the patient getting what the dermatologist prescribes. Over the last 30 years what I have learned from many dermatologist friends is that dermatology is as much an art as it is a science. Every patient is unique and different, they have different skin types, lifestyles and needs. While to some it seems frustrating to have so many vehicles for delivering topical medications, my view is that this approach is patient centric because a prescribed medication that is not used is a failure.

Question: What can be done about the cost of drugs in dermatology?

Humphries: I think there is a need for creative strategies around access. When dermatologists write prescriptions for treatments that they think will best treat that specific patient, that patient should be able to receive that medication. We've been working on this problem at Ortho Dermatologics and I am hopeful that we'll be able to announce a few sustainable solutions soon.

Question: What words of advice would you have for someone who is starting their career in dermatology?

Humphries: I'd congratulate them and let them know that they have chosen a field that allows them to change people's lives on many different levels – how they look, how they feel, how confident they are in approaching others. They are also joining an industry that supports one another, so I would encourage them to meet as many different dermatologists as they can, ask questions and form relationships that will help them as they establish their reputations and practices. Finally, I would encourage them to take advantage of the spirit of philanthropy that exists in the industry – whether it's through an industry program like our Aspire Higher or Passion to Heal programs or through the great work the societies do, this is an industry that believes in working towards the greater good.