

COLLABORATING WITH INDUSTRY TO IMPROVE PATIENT CARE

Manjinder Bains, Medical Director for the UK and Ireland, has been at Ipsen for 18 months. Since 2007, he has worked within the pharmaceutical industry across a variety of roles and companies, previously having worked within the NHS for over 8 years.

TELL US ABOUT YOUR ROLE AT IPSEN

I oversee and provide strategic medical leadership to the organisation and to our entire medical department. This includes the medical information team, medical science liaisons, medical advisors and our clinical operations team. The local medical function is responsible for medical governance, generating real world evidence to support the use of our medicines. They also gather insights from healthcare professionals, and provide them with scientific exchange and medical education. The clinical operations team's focus is on designing, planning and running clinical trials on existing or new medicines.

Externally, we work with almost every stakeholder that has an interest in healthcare. These include pharmacists, nurses, doctors, patient associations and charities, through to academics, professional societies and regulatory bodies like the Association of the British Pharmaceutical Industry, NICE and Medicines and Healthcare Products Regulatory Agency. We also liaise with local MPs all the way up to the Minister for Health. We form long-lasting partnerships with our customers and the medical community to find ways to help the NHS and patients.

HOW DO YOU COLLABORATE WITH OTHER ENDOCRINE PROFESSIONALS?

Collaboration with endocrine professionals is critical to our strategy and focus. There are no two groups of stakeholders more aligned to the goal of improving the lives of people with endocrine conditions.

As a biopharmaceutical company, collaboration with specialist clinicians makes up most of our day-to-day work. We require their insight and knowledge regarding gaps in the treatment paradigm. We work with them to initiate new clinical trials and truly understand the patient journey. And they work with us to help progress the latest scientific advancements or improve overall patient care. Through Joint Working with the NHS, we can pool skills, experience and resources with trusts for the mutual development and implementation of patient-centred projects, and share a commitment to successful delivery.

Our endocrine focus at Ipsen is predominantly on neuroendocrine cancers and acromegaly. When working with academics or societies, our joint goal is always to improve care and outcomes for patients with endocrine diseases. This can be achieved through a range of collaborative efforts, such as clinical trials, disease awareness or medical education.

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Through sponsorship of congresses, symposium presentations and attendance at meetings, we can educate the wider endocrine community about the specific focus areas that we have so much history working in, while also developing our own knowledge. We also have a patient affairs function at Ipsen that works collaboratively with patient associations and charities. This ensures the patient voice is represented in all decisions made within the business, and identifies areas of unmet need within the patient community that we could seek to support.

WHAT ARE THE ADVANTAGES OF THESE RELATIONSHIPS?

Each stakeholder has a unique set of skills and opportunities. Working in silos, we would all eventually hit the limits of what we can achieve. As a company, we work with clinicians and societies across the UK and Ireland. One of the great benefits we can bring to these individual relationships is an insight from across the country.

We believe that, by sharing our resources and knowledge, we can enable the greatest reach of best practice. When we work in collaboration, bringing all people, organisations and companies with the same goal together, we can work with greater efficiency and speed to achieve our shared goal of improving patient care.

HOW WOULD YOU LIKE THESE RELATIONSHIPS TO DEVELOP?

I believe we have seen a positive change over the past several years in these relationships. There has been greater transparency between industry and all

our partners, which has led to more honest and collaborative relationships. I would love to see these collaborations continue based on our shared and aligned goals of getting the best outcomes for patients.

We at Ipsen really do live the ethos of working with patients for patients and, as the wider community sees the authenticity in the way we work, I believe these relationships will continue to go from strength to strength.

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WHY DO YOU ENJOY WORKING AT IPSEN?

Ipsen has 90 years of heritage as a family-owned biopharmaceutical company and has been working with the endocrine community in the UK for 19 years. In my 18 months here, I have been consistently astounded by the passion, talent and commitment of the people within the organisation. What I enjoy most is seeing the dedication of Ipsen staff, in collaboration with the wider community, to continuing to improve patient treatment and care.

The areas we specifically focus on in endocrinology are both classified as uncommon or rare, and patients who live with neuroendocrine cancer or acromegaly often live with their disease for a long time. Over the past 19 years, Ipsen has worked collaboratively with physicians, nurses and the patients themselves to identify areas of improvement. Some examples of this, of which I am particularly proud, include developing treatment options that keep patients out of hospital, improving our medicine delivery system through co-creation with patients and nurses, creation of patient friendly materials and support resources, hosting annual nurse education events and improving awareness of these conditions.

CAN YOU TELL US A LITTLE ABOUT WHAT YOU ARE WORKING ON NOW?

Every year, we offer educational programmes for endocrine healthcare professionals and clinical nurse specialists across the UK & Ireland. Like most things, this year we have had to adapt what would traditionally be face-to-face events to the virtual world, so that is a big priority for our team right now. Ipsen is a supporter of the Society for Endocrinology. This year, we had a satellite symposium at the SfE BES Online conference in November.

We are continually engaging with the acromegaly patient community through workshops to understand the unmet needs in the patient journey, and how Ipsen can develop materials and services to help patients. Additionally, our clinical team is always working on bringing new innovative medicines to market and generating more evidence to support clinicians and patients in the use of our currently available licensed medicines. And finally, we have been working with our global colleagues to support the charity campaigns for the recent Acromegaly Awareness Day (1 November) and World NET Cancer Day (10 November).

HOW HAS THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC AFFECTED YOUR WORK?

It has been a time of immense challenge for staff, but has also demonstrated the immense agility and resilience within Ipsen. When the pandemic moved the UK into lockdown in March, our primary concern and focus were ensuring that all patients who were receiving Ipsen medicines continued to have access to their treatments. Once we were confident our supply chain and manufacturing colleagues could all continue to work in a safe and secure environment, we looked at how we could support the wider NHS. We offered all staff the opportunity to volunteer in the fight against the pandemic, with extra allowances for specialist staff, such as doctors and nurses, to return to the front lines.

We recognised early on that, to support our staff (900 employees across the UK and Ireland), we were going to have to be flexible and focus on listening, as there would not be a 'one size fits all' way of working in this 'new world'. We focused on our staff's well-being, with a range of digital resources from yoga and reiki to an online well-being hub, a network of Mental Health and Well-being Ambassadors, and our Employee Assistance Programme to ensure our employees not only have on-going support from their line manager but also other avenues, should they need them.

Home-working has become the norm for our teams, and we have become more agile in how we have internal meetings using virtual platforms. I personally have loved the opportunity to meet my colleagues' children, pets and family when they join our video calls. Our meetings with customers and healthcare professionals have also changed from being face-to-face to virtual, which has meant we have had to adapt to making these interactions more efficient and impactful during such a busy time.

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Our main concern throughout is to keep patients who receive Ipsen medicine at the front of our minds, and to support the wider healthcare community during one of the most challenging situations we have lived through. We have been able to do this by keeping patients out of hospital through our unique service offerings, focus and persistent determination from the team. Overall, I can confidently say, our focus and priorities have not changed. If anything, the pandemic reinforced our vision and values.

The Society for Endocrinology's Corporate Liaison Committee fosters partnerships and collaborations between the Society and industry for mutually beneficial projects, which further patient care and education. If you would like to be involved with this Committee, contact corporateliason@endocrinology.org.