

24 Feb - 1 Mar 2020

News

Ex-AbbVie leads new pharma 25.02.2020

Posted 25 February 2020

After building up its commercial cancer team, AbbVie Australia's ex-head of oncology Simon Dawson has moved to lead the [brand new](#) local affiliate of Japanese company Kyowa Kirin.

Launched six months ago, the new company plans to bring two therapies to Australia in its initial phase - lymphoma drug mogamulizumab and X-linked hypophosphataemia drug burosumab, both of which have received orphan designation.

Dawson spoke to *Pharma in Focus* on Monday and said the company will take both drugs into regulatory and reimbursement processes, although he kept timings under wraps.

"We've got some other pipeline products that are coming that we're looking at how we're going to bring to Australia."

Dawson landed in the general manager role at Kyowa after spending two years at AbbVie Australia building its commercial oncology team and overseeing commercialisation of [homegrown blockbuster Venclexta](#).

He knew of Kyowa from previous roles at Amgen as the two companies had a licensing partnership, with a job at the new local affiliate "too good an opportunity to miss".

Kyowa Kirin Australia now has three employees, with another expected to join next month.

"The number should ramp up in the next 12 months or so," Dawson said, adding the next staff search would focus on sales and marketing, with other core functions to follow.

"We have some excellent external partners, including regulatory, market access, legal and accounting, so really it's just working out... which one of those are best external [and] what should we bring in-house over time," he said.

The company is working temporarily out of offices belonging to parent company Kirin's food and beverage subsidiary Lion, which owns several breweries in Australia, although Dawson anticipated his team would outgrow the space "fairly quickly" and while the company's official headquarters are yet to be determined, it will be in Sydney.

The company is also mulling over whether or not to join Medicines Australia (MA), with meetings lined up with the industry body.

"We're considering it - I think that's probably the best answer," Dawson said.

When asked about the challenges of launching a new affiliate, Dawson said it was early days but it was certainly a leaner operation compared to building teams at established pharmas.

"At AbbVie, I did start up the oncology commercial function so there was a lot to create there. But this is another level because at AbbVie it is a very well-structured, well-resourced organisation. At Kyowa Kirin we're basically starting from scratch."

Dawson characterised the company's decision to establish a local arm rather than license its drugs as a considered choice.

"Kyowa Kirin is a Japanese company and I think the Japanese culture is not to make rash decisions, so a lot of thought went into this. It's part of Kyowa Kirin's strategy to become a global speciality pharmaceutical company.

"I think it's great there's another pharmaceutical company coming to Australia... It's a good reflection on Australia, that we're encouraging companies to set up direct affiliates here."

Yajun Ma



Kyowa Kirin Aust GM Simon Dawson

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