

## Will they? Won't they?

Sir William Osler, Canadian physician and a founding professor of Johns Hopkins Hospital, stated "Medicine is a science of uncertainty and an art of probability". The same can easily be said of the pharmaceutical industry, as those of our colleagues involved in the research and development of new pharmacological molecules and new medicinal products will attest.



Lately, however, this element of uncertainty has been compounded beyond all expectations. Only as recently as my last message to you, talk was rife of an exceptional year of merger and acquisition activity in the sector. Fast forward a few months, and new financial rules across the Atlantic have disrupted the largest merger to emerge from the first half of the year, one that bore all the signs of a favourable union between two complimentary companies, whilst another merger that many were expecting to descend into an acerbic process of litigation has come to naught, upstaged by an amalgamation that will create one of the ten largest pharmaceutical companies worldwide. Thus, the attention now shifts to two other companies free to return to the bargaining table, as all ask the question:

### Will they? Won't they?

Against this backdrop of merger activity, industrial pharmacists unfortunately continue to experience a different kind of uncertainty. The ink was hardly dry on media reports of the largest pharmaceutical merger of the year thus far, when – as always – statements of the need for cuts were reported, and in the eyes of friends, peers, colleagues who have given years of service to these players can be seen the concern, the doubt, the unuttered question:

### Will they? Won't they?

This issue of *European Industrial Pharmacy* includes two topics that will define a new and emerging

pharmaceutical industry. The first of these is the issue of biosimilars. The years when these products will form the backbone of global healthcare loom just over the horizon, and whilst regulatory authorities have begun to issue guidelines for the industry, experience in biosimilar development and especially in the understanding of the mindset of different authorities when evaluating these products is still lacking. The second topic is that of the

Delegated Act on the detailed rules for a Unique Identifier for medicinal products, the publication of which, by all accounts, is expected soon. While the broader strokes of this legislation that will have far-reaching effects throughout the continent are by now fairly clear to many, the minutiae of the process remain largely unknown, leaving actors in the pharmaceutical supply chain in a state of uncertainty, asking largely unanswered questions and left to wonder:

### Will they? Won't they?

Against this backdrop of uncertainty, however, one thing can be safely taken for granted – pharma is changing with time and the industrial pharmacist of the future will need new skill sets to continue to form the backbone of this industry – *tempora mutantur, nos et mutamur in illis*. Therefore, it is imperative that we look to the future, to be prepared for the challenges with which our profession will be faced. Meanwhile, however, I look to a more immediate future and extend to you all from EIPG the very best wishes for a serene festive season and a prosperous new year.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Claude Farrugia'.

Professor Claude Farrugia  
Vice-President Communications, EIPG