

Hadley Wood Healthcare – the holistic supplier

Hadley Wood Healthcare's product range evolved from the needs of its own complementary health clinic into a supplier of high quality, specialist natural health products. Co-founder Marcus Webb talked to **Rachel Symonds** about the company's philosophy.

In any competitive marketplace, to be able to offer a USP to your business is important, and that's certainly the case in the natural health sector, where competition is ever increasing.

This is certainly the situation for Hadley Wood Healthcare, a natural health company that started life in 1988 by Marcus Webb, and his wife Maria.

The business was set up as a complementary health clinic in north London, where it is still thriving today. But over time, the couple found they were also being asked by independent health stores and fellow practitioners to supply them with products they were hearing about being recommended at the clinic. And so, almost by accident they became a supplier for a range of brands. Today, they continue to offer a truly holistic portfolio to health stores.

What this has given the business is a unique offering; Hadley Wood typically sources high quality products that are often not that well known in the UK. The clinic gives them a unique insight into what products are needed in the marketplace because of the real world feedback they get from the patients attending their health clinic.

"We wanted to find quality products that we could recommend to our patients with specific health concerns but when we started out there was not a vast amount of options in the UK," Marcus explained.

And so they researched brands, turning to the American market, in particular, which was much more established at that time.

"As time went on, customers would try and obtain the products we recommended from a local health food store and so retailers asked us where they could get hold of it. We realised there was no reason we couldn't supply shops, so it grew very organically. With our experience in the clinic, we knew what products met our standards and



Marcus Webb, and his wife Maria

produced results."

He added: "Our products are certainly niche but they fill a demand. We have never set out to be a mass supplier of products. Our products are not the cheapest and never will be because we source high quality, niche products. We are not about marketing 'me too' products, we look for things that are unusual."

The naturopathic approach

There's no doubt that Marcus and Maria are experienced in what they do. Marcus was fascinated by complementary healthcare and its ability to get to the root cause of why people became ill in the first place, and this led him to

study naturopathy. Maria, herself a physical therapist, has grown up with complementary healthcare, given her father is the highly respected naturopath, Jan de Vries.

Given their credentials, it is to be expected that they are pretty strict in terms of the products they will use in the clinic, and now in the products they will supply. And they found that America was the place to source such products.

Marcus explained: "The Americans were a step ahead. The main difference is the American market had a lot of standardisation in their manufacturing. For us in the clinic, standardisation is important and was not something, at that time, many people knew much about. It meant that customers were getting products that were pure, high quality and could guarantee each one was the same."

It also helped that the products filled a gap within the natural health market.

"These products are targeted at specific health concerns, they were batch controlled, standardised and there was a certificate to back this up," Marcus said.

Within the portfolio, there is some rather niche products, for example one for those suffering with anal itching.

But Marcus explained: "We had a lot of people suffering with this problem, and so we looked for a product to deal with it. That really highlights how the company works – we get presented with a health concern, in which there may not be particularly good solutions for, we research a product, and make it available in the UK."

The products are quite technical, which can present a problem in the sense that manufacturers are so restricted about what they can say about products these days. But, Marcus adds, consumers are pretty savvy these days.

"We find that a lot of people who use them are already well educated about it, because they find out a lot of the information themselves. Customers will



often go in and request the product by name because they have done their own research," he added.

The portfolio

Hadley Wood Healthcare now works with a number of different brands, many of which are American or Canadian.

"One manufacturer will not cover everything we need, and each will be strong and specialise in a specific area, for example one could be expert in probiotics, and another could be good at producing food-based products," Marcus said.

"Quality is what we look for, that's really key for us. If it fits with our criteria, and there's demand for it, then we will take it on."

One of the first Hadley Wood Healthcare worked with was Enzymatic Therapy, one of North America's leading manufacturers of dietary supplements. They were advanced in their approach, for example in 1986 they introduced standardised pharmaceutical-grade ginkgo biloba to America, and in 1993 brought glucosamine sulphate to the US. The company also introduced True Delivery Technology to encapsulate and protect the beneficial microflora in its Acidophilus Pearls.

Acidophilus Pearls is a range that Hadley Wood also supplies. There are four products, taken in an easy one-a-day format, all with no refrigeration required and triple layer True Delivery Technology.

"We wanted a product that was of the highest quality and that would survive the transit from the stomach to the bowel without being damaged and that's why the pearls were created," he said. "The pearls protect the bacteria from damage, so it can make it to the bowel, where it breaks down and then populates the bowel very effectively."

One big USP for this product is that independent research has demonstrated there is one billion bacteria in the product at the date of expiry. This is a different claim to some other products out there, which may instead determine their levels at time of manufacture.

Then there are digestive enzymes. Marcus explains that many are pork-based, but those supplied by Hadley Wood are plant-based enzymes, making them suitable for vegetarians and vegans.

"These are great because they tick all the boxes; they are plant-based enzymes,



made in a well-controlled manufacturing process and we know the enzyme is active," he pointed out.

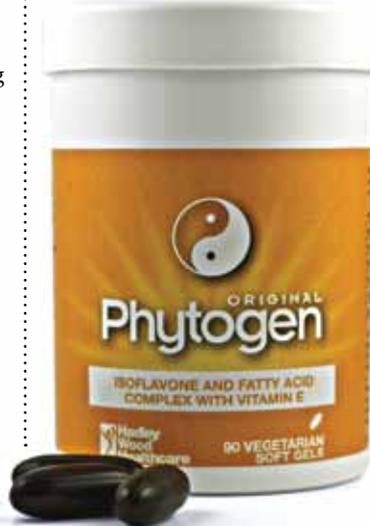
Also within the portfolio is Nature's Way, Natural Factors, and Transfer Point, which manufactures a high quality beta glucan product.

"It is an extremely pure product that has undergone an extremely detailed process," Marcus said.

And then there is IP6, one of the brands Hadley Wood Healthcare has worked with for many years. It is a technical, and rather niche product, but one that Marcus says fills a gap. It is the original formula by the University of Maryland Pathologist Dr A.K.M. Shamsuddin, MD, PhD, and is made of the naturally occurring compounds IP-6 and Inositol produced in Japan



from highly purified rice bran. Developed over the last 20 years through scientific research by Dr Shamsuddin, the combination of Inositol and its derivative Inositol Hexaphosphate (IP-6), works synergistically with many body systems to help support optimal health. [hfb](#)



THE FUTURE

The natural health market has, of course, suffered at the hands of the recession, but Marcus says there is still a place for high quality products, and cost, perhaps surprisingly, hasn't been a barrier.

"The products are more expensive but that wasn't such an issue because we could see how high quality the products were, and there was evidence to support the use of the product," he said. "Cost is less of an issue because people see how they make a difference to their health. They are usually just relieved to find a product available to help them."

The business is always looking to the future, keeping an eye on what new products are being developed in America and the latest developments in terms of scientific research.

"We always have an ear to the

ground and this is greatly helped by people coming into the clinic with real life health issues, which helps us develop the portfolio. We are always on the lookout for new products and innovative ingredients," he said.

A key focus in the coming months is further developing its digestive health ranges within health food stores.

"We are focusing on enzymes at the moment and we are looking at some other things, such as a celery seed extract, which is an extremely good natural aid to water balance. But we are still faced with the fact that you have a good product and you can't talk about it."

In terms of Hadley Wood's offering to retailers, as well as providing both marketing and technical support, Marcus points out that, as a

small company itself, Hadley Wood understand the demands of retailers.

"The thing that's fairly unique to us as far as independent health stores go is we don't have a minimum order. That's beneficial if retailers don't want to commit to a high order, especially when it's a new product," Marcus said, adding: "We are a small business too and we understand that retailers may not want to place orders for high quantities. And because we are a small business, we can really offer that personal service."

He finished: "We don't know what will happen next in the market in this ever-increasing environment of rules and regulations but the benefit of being a small company is we can move fairly quickly in terms of responding to market requirements and developing new products."