



AT THE HELM

Larry Iaquinto, president

PERFORMANCE

2006 revenues up 14%

HIGHLIGHTS

First Pfizer AOR assignment (PF-3512676); wins from: BMS (Javlor, brivnib), Agera Labs (cosmeceuticals), Novartis (Mycograb, tifacogin), Boehringer Ingelheim (Aptivus)

Hired Margaret Gardner as director, client services, IneXel

CHALLENGES

Educating clients on use of non-personal promotion

No losses, although BMS halted Emsam

For contact details, service offerings and client roster, see Agency A-to-Z, beginning on page 143

Interlink Healthcare Communications

Wins from Pfizer and BMS, and its first foray into DTC, add up to a solid year



Interlink added Pfizer to the fold, expanded further into Bristol-Myers Squibb and, for the first time, took on DTC work. Meanwhile, its in-house multimedia resource center and med ed capabilities continue apace.

President Larry Iaquinto says revenues at the 100-person, Lawrenceville, NJ, agency grew 14% in 2006 vs. 2005. Part of Interpublic Group's Lowe Healthcare network, the agency reports continued traction among all units under the Interlink corporate umbrella known as IHC Group: IneXel for medical communications, Interlink for advertising and promotion, i-Link for multimedia and InGrafik for design and production services.

In the last three months, Interlink has worked on three professional project accounts for area biotech firms. While all have asked the agency not to put them on its roster just yet, Iaquinto sees the work as an entrée into the specialty market. IHC also has gained a foothold at Pfizer with its first AOR assignment there: US and global advertising/promotion for cancer drug PF-3512676, in Phase III trials for lung cancer.

From existing client BMS, Interlink now has Javlor—a co-promote between BMS and Pierre Fabre Medicament for bladder cancer—and brivnib, a targeted cancer therapy. Both accounts involve traditional pre-launch and worldwide professional work.

That's comforting, as BMS stopped all professional

promotion for another Interlink account, anti-depression patch Emsam. Even though transdermal delivery decreases the dangers of dietary interactions associated with so-called monoamine oxidase inhibitors, doctors resisted using the patch due to what Iaquinto described as long-held negative attitudes toward this class.

Faced with a similar situation are Merck's MK 524A and MK 524B, two Phase III lipid-management drugs for which Interlink handles US professional. Merck is betting it can overcome the stigma of niacin—it causes a condition called "flush"—by combining extended-release niacin with a flush inhibitor (MK 524A).

The agency is preparing to relaunch the Agera Laboratories line that includes 74 cosmeceutical products. Interlink is doing professional communication to plastic surgeons, aestheticians and cosmetic surgeons as well as DTC on the spa/salon OTC products.

The agency already had cosmeceutical experience based on winning the Inamed Reloxin pitch. Its work on Reloxin was interrupted, though, when marketing rights to the botulinum toxin product were released to Medicus after Inamed acquired Botox's marketer, Allergan, early last year. (Reloxin is still in clinical trials.)

Interlink won global, professional pre-launch work for two Novartis hospital-based antibiotics, antifungal Mycograb and tifacogin for severe community acquired pneumonia. New client Boehringer Ingelheim selected Interlink for the global relaunch of HIV drug Aptivus.

IneXel continues to ramp up, with new publications



Above: Novartis' Glivec (I), Enzon's Oncaspar ads
Top left: Part of an ad for GE Healthcare's Optison

business for BMS oncology drug ixabepilone and Javlor; publications and med ed work on Merck's V212, a follow-up to the Zostavax vaccine; and med ed work on Janumet and for Novartis Transplant. These add to a base of business that includes Merck diabetes drug Januvia, Zostavax and BMS hypertension drug Avapro/Avalide and its cancer pill Erbitux.

Interlink has the most digital expertise of any of the Lowe Healthcare shops, and i-Link has expanded projects in non-personal promotion. "We're seeing more direct mail...more electronic e-flashes, e-zines and Web sites," Iaquinto reports. —Marc Iskowitz

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—Larry Iaquinto