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Patients come first



A first in its field, UCB and its design partners, OXO and Smart Design, have joined forces to create the UCB/OXO Cimzia® Prefilled Syringe, a patient-centric product for people suffering with rheumatoid arthritis (RA). A shift away from the pharmaceutical focus, the syringe is created specifically with the user in mind, affording people with RA the freedom to be less dependent and take more control of their condition.

Rheumatoid arthritis is a specific form of arthritis that affects the joints in a similar way to osteoarthritis, yet it can strike at any age. Strength in patients can be reduced by as much as a third of that of the general population and dexterity is often greatly reduced. There are millions of sufferers worldwide, of varying ages, with approximately seventy-five per cent being female. The condition can be debilitating and requires regular, ongoing treatment.

UCB, a global pharmaceutical leader, spent years developing Cimzia®, a ground-breaking biological medication that can greatly reduce the symptoms

of rheumatoid arthritis and be self-administered by patients, enabling them the autonomy to manage their condition from home.

However, recognising that existing syringes often present problems for people with reduced dexterity due to the condition, they partnered with OXO, the company behind the Good Grips line of products, to create a solution. OXO, in turn, contacted long-time design partner Smart Design.

Through this tri-partnership, they developed the first ever user-centric syringe designed specifically for people with rheumatoid arthritis – the UCB/OXO Cimzia® Prefilled Syringe.

In approaching the project, the team undertook extensive research into understanding the lives of people living with RA, in their homes, to identify the day-to-day challenges of living with the condition. Over an





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eighteen-month period, they worked closely with a smaller focus group of patients in order to identify the requirements in terms of the design and biomechanics. Cognitive psychology was also employed with physical tasks and measurements.

"The design team immersed themselves in the world of people who live with arthritis in order to really understand their experience with limited dexterity," explains Davin Stowell, CEO and founder of Smart Design. "We developed a syringe and packaging components designed specifically for arthritis patients. We aimed to make patients feel more in control during the process of self-injection, more empowered, instead of reminding them of their illness."

Features such as the finger flanges and plunger had to be designed from a self-administering patient perspective. Details such as sharp corners and pointy protuberances were also factors that, in the past, hadn't been considered from the viewpoint of sufferers of the condition.

The final syringe was the result of meticulous user-focused design, combined with biomechanics and psychology, promising to deliver through the device itself, the packaging and the medication guide.

The features of this unique user-friendly syringe include a non-slip finger grip, allowing the device to be held steadily in various positions; a finger loop on the needle shield to make it easier to remove the cap and help prevent accidental needle sticks; an extra-large plunger rod and rubber thumb pad to make it easy to push the plunger; and a clear oval syringe barrel to assist initial needle placement and magnify the plunger rod to improve visibility.

In addition to the syringe itself, the packaging and medication guide were also considered essential factors.

"UCB developed premium packaging components that shift the paradigm of pharmaceutical packaging by designing for the consumer first. I am proud of this patient-centric approach and the fact that people living with rheumatoid arthritis worked directly with the design teams to develop the Cimzia® packaging," said Roch Doliveux, chief executive officer of UCB.

The steps are clear and easy to follow, speaking directly to the user, with compassionate language. The guide supplies the same information as the packaging, yet with clear photos for ease of usability. Overall, the packaging aims to provide consumer-centred usability as well as a positive experience for the user, allowing the patient to get a proper dose of medication as effortlessly as possible, from opening the box and following the steps, to removing the syringe, administering the dose and even returning the syringe into the box after use.

Patients are able to exert forty-eight per cent more force with the OXO syringe than with a traditional syringe, increasing the number of RA sufferers able to self-administer.

Created purely around the patient, rather than the pharmaceutical industry, this unique collaboration has won a red dot communication design award. ■