1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background

The names of the company and products in the study are strictly confidential and hence code names have been adopted. Company A is an established international market leader in the pharmaceutical trade. One of the company's products (Product Y) is one of three drugs effective for treatment of Benign Prostatic Hyperplasia (BPH) (Campbell *et al.*, 1997). The local BPH market is a niche market, and as 'end-user specialist' (Kotler, 1997), the company's focus is to target the product for use only by physicians specifically trained in or with experience in the field of urology.

Benign Prostatic Hyperplasia (BPH) is a non-cancerous condition in which the number of prostate cells increases, causing the gland to enlarge. This condition afflicts aging men from approximately 50 years onwards. BPH is a problem because an enlarged prostate can put pressure on the urethra, squeezing the sides of the urinary tract together, resulting in urinary problems. Nearly all men develop BPH if they live long enough. Half of those who develop BPH will develop symptoms ranging from difficult urination and incontinence to infections of the urinary tract and bladder. A third of these men will experience symptoms severe enough to require treatment (Campbell *et al.*, 1997; Miller, 2002). Surgical treatment is one option (eg. transurethral resection of the prostate (TURP) or radical prostatectomy), while medical treatment is more common (Fox and Fox, 1996; James, 1999).

Currently there are two classes of drugs available for the treatment of BPH (Campbell *et al.*, 1997). The newer drugs are referred to as alpha-blockers. In this class there were two important products in the market (Products X and Y). In the second group of drugs called alpha-r inhibitors there was one major competitor (Product Z). Products X, Y and Z were introduced in the market in 1992, 1995 and 1990, respectively.

An analysis of the performance of Product Y (from Company records) indicated slow growth. There was only speculative information available on the competitors' products. Published reports or information on the nature and size of the potential local market was limited. The only information currently available for the private market is from International Medical Services (IMS). The current BPH market in the private sector is valued at RM4million (IMS 4th QTR 2001). Government hospitals (Ministry of Health, Annual Reports) does not have accurate data on BPH patients, thus competitor information in this sector is very limited. A comparative analysis of all (three) product profiles showed differences in terms of efficacy, side effects, convenience in terms of dosage, time taken for onset of action and other characteristics. Company A's management needed primary data on the market and customer information to assist in the decision on the proposal to launch a new improved formulation of Product Y (designated as Product U).

A customer and market evaluation was thus essential to understand the market and develop relevant marketing strategies for such a launch. In order for Company A to ensure success of the launch, information was needed on the current management practices and choice of treatment options for BPH by physicians who treat BPH patients. An indication of the acceptable pricing range, optimal pricing or perceived value, and the penetration price of the new product was also needed for pricing decision.

1.2. Objectives

The objectives of this study were:

1. To estimate the local patient load of physician i.e market potential (patients treated by both Specialist and General Practitioners).

2. To determine the drugs commonly prescribed by local doctors treating BPH patients (both Specialists and General Practitioners), understand relative importance of factors determining drug therapy and evaluate customer perceptions and concerns.

3. To evaluate the future expected increase in usage of the major products currently available (Products X, Y, Z) and assess the market for the improved formulation (Product U).

4. To investigate price sensitivity and project the perceived normal price and the penetration price for the new proposed once daily formulation to be launched.

1.3. Scope and limitations

The scope of the study was partly exploratory and partly descriptive. The results were all quantified. It was a survey of experts (physicians), not patients, and the sample population included both Specialists (Urologists) and General Practitioners (GPs) who treated BPH patients. The study was conducted to explore both markets, and evaluate influence of the 'consumers' (prescribers of treatment); understand the factors that the 'consumers' consider important in choice of treatment (product); their expected future usage of the product; factors that may influence increased usage of the products; and customers perceived price or willingness to pay for quality.

The results of the survey should provide an indicative overview for certain management decisions as the source of the data, *ie.* the respondents, can be categorized as practicing experts with credibility, reputation and trustworthiness.

1.4. Importance of the study

The results of this study provide some basic information that give clear indications on strengths and opportunities to develop new strategies and future direction in the marketing of Company A's product for treating BPH.