



THE MARKET

The use of aspirin-like substances can be traced back to Hippocrates in 400BC, who advocated the use of willow bark extract to help relieve pain in childbirth. Since aspirin was first made available to the public in Victorian days, it has become the world's most widely used pain reliever. Even today it retains its position as a leading analgesic in spite of the large number of other pain remedies developed since then. Aspirin's main analgesic competitor is paracetamol which, although effective enough against pain, lacks two particular attributes that aspirin possesses - its anti-inflammatory action and its cardiovascular indications.

The Over-The-Counter analgesics market is one of the most valuable self-medication markets internationally, with global sales estimated at more than four billion US dollars annually. In Australia the retail analgesics market is currently estimated at \$181 million a year. As the trend towards self-medication continues, led by government initiatives to reduce public spending on healthcare, steady market growth is expected to continue.

Australians consume more than 70 million tablets of Disprin each year, purchasing the product through both pharmacy and grocery outlets with grocery being the predominant place of purchase.

HISTORY

When Reckitt & Colman first launched Disprin 50 years ago, it was heralded as the most important advance in aspirin since the drug was first 'discovered' in 1899.

Why so important? Because, although aspirin was known to be a remarkably effective drug, some individuals were prone to digestive upsets and gastric discomforts as a result of swallowing solid tablets of the drug. While many attempts were made between 1938 and 1948 to overcome



these issues by providing aspirin in a soluble form, none was successful until the invention of Disprin and that success was not easily won!

In 1939, Reckitt & Sons Ltd, seeking to build upon its reputation gained in the medical field by the earlier introduction of its hugely successful Dettol antiseptic, took up the challenge. Chemist Harold Scruton was given his brief: "Develop a stable, soluble aspirin - one that won't crumble or absorb too much water to be effective". Because of the Second World War, Scruton only had simple ingredients to work with. Indeed, the Reckitt & Colman UK site itself was bombed, but Scruton and his team of chemists continued working in their makeshift laboratory in a laundry in Hull, UK. Scruton found that mixing aspirin, chalk and starch - which was in plentiful supply in the laundry - produced a tablet that was both soluble and stable.

The challenge facing the Disprin development team was finding a base that would not react with the aspirin until the moment of administration, when it had to react fast and form a completely soluble salt. This was eventually achieved using calcium carbonate. But chemical prob-

lems were not the only challenges... there were also mechanical ones to deal with. Tablets had to be punched out using rudimentary tools - three pieces of steel, and a hammer! It is interesting to note that today's high-speed tableting machines still work on the same basic principle.

After 10 years of hard graft, Disprin was finally introduced to the medical profession in November 1948 at the London Medical Exhibition held in Westminster, London. It was heralded as the most important advance in aspirin since the discovery of the drug, and, appropriate to the product's wartime heritage, its sales were soon 'going like a bomb'.

As Disprin was formulated specifically to overcome stomach problems, the brand was quickly endorsed by doctors and pharmacists who began to see excellent stomach tolerance levels compared to solid aspirin.

THE PRODUCT

50 years later Disprin is still going strong and despite advances in science and medicine, the brand remains as relevant today as it was half a century ago. Several modifications to the Disprin formulation have occurred over the years to improve tablet dispersion characteristics and simplify the manufacturing process. In more recent times, a small amount of flavouring agent has been incorporated, but the soluble aspirin aspect has remained the core of the Disprin brand.

Disprin's solubility guarantees that more



aspirin is absorbed into the bloodstream than from solid aspirin tablets, giving a more effective level of pain relief. Its soluble format also means it can reach the bloodstream faster, with research indicating that it can start to be absorbed in as little as 5 minutes, reaching maximum analgesic levels up to 3 times faster than paracetamol tablets. Disprin counteracts pain and elevated temperature (fever) and is therefore suitable for common aches and pains, from backache and period pain to headaches and sore throats. Its anti-inflammatory action also makes Disprin an excellent analgesic for pain with inflammation such as muscle pain, arthritis and toothache.

More recently, research has shown that aspirin is an excellent choice for treating, and maybe even preventing, the pain associated with migraine headache attacks. Aspirin's antiplatelet activity may be useful in aborting the migraine attack if taken early enough, and its quick absorption helps to overcome the problems posed by gastric stasis during migraine.

It is also now well known that low doses of aspirin, taken every day, can considerably reduce the risks of heart attack and stroke in individuals who have already suffered these problems. Aspirin may also be useful in helping people who have a high risk of heart disease by reducing the likelihood of first heart attacks. There is also growing evidence that aspirin may help in reducing the risk of colon cancer and cataracts and in preserving people's mental function in old age!

RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

Fifty years after its launch, Disprin is celebrating a new golden era. 1998 was a particularly exciting year for Disprin. Not only did it mark the 50th anniversary of the brand; it also saw a global re-launch with dynamic new packaging. The new modern pack design of bright cobalt blue helps to emphasize the power and effectiveness of Disprin while the sword and circle have been retained to reassure consumers of Disprin's trusted heritage. This new design confirms that Disprin is a premium contemporary analgesic that can provide fast and effective pain relief for today's consumer.

The developments haven't stopped there. While the original brand variant is available in packs of 24, 48 and 96 tablets each containing 300mg of soluble aspirin, Disprin has been extended to two other variants to meet Australian consumers' requirements.

'Disprin Extra Strength' contains 500 mg of soluble aspirin for extra pain relief and is available from supermarkets and pharmacies. 'Disprin Direct' tablets are aspirin tablets that can be taken anywhere. They disperse on the



tongue with a clean fresh taste, for fast relief of pain. With Disprin Direct there is no need for water, ideal for today's busy lifestyles and great for travel - Disprin Direct can be taken in the car, on the train, out shopping, or anywhere that water is not to hand.

The recently approved use of low-dose aspirin for cardiovascular indications, and the mounting clinical evidence for its use in other 'anti-platelet' indications, has given aspirin a new lease of life. It is now being hailed as a "wonder drug", a century after it was discovered! For a brand which is over 50 years old, Disprin certainly has a remarkably bright future!

PROMOTION

Disprin itself was first advertised to consumers in the 1950s and early print advertising strongly featured its medical heritage. Prominent in all print advertising was the doctor-endorsed slogan "Take an aspirin - I mean a Disprin"; as was the unique format of the product (soluble rather than solid); and its better tolerated formulation. Pack claims centered on "pain relief with better gastric tolerance", and the fact that Disprin was "neutral, soluble aspirin".

Television advertising was first developed in black & white in the UK in 1956, and featured quasi-medical themes. The key product charac-



teristic (solubility) was used to convey gentle, rapid, pain relief reinforced by the tag line "the sort doctors prefer".

In Australia the solubility theme continued to be the major focus in advertising and promotional campaigns during the 1970s and early 1980s. Disprin was positioned as the fast, safe, gentle solution for headaches, fever and cold/flu symptoms. Family endorsement also featured strongly, with phrases such as "the family solution" and "the all round helper" being introduced for the first time.

In the late 1980s and early 1990s, several different advertising executions emerged in Disprin's key markets, again centering on solubility and speed of action as the core message. In Australia "Disprin works" was used to reinforce the product's effectiveness.

More recently Disprin's advertising strategy has been reviewed and new campaigns have been developed based on the tried and trusted core element, "solubility and speed of action" but also, more strongly on the efficacy of the product.

The primary medium of communication for the brand has been television though print advertising and in-store displays have been key in building brand recall to the high level that it enjoys today.

BRAND VALUES

Reckitt & Colman take pride in the contribution that their stable soluble aspirin preparations have made to the relief of pain - of all the ills to which humanity is subject, pain requires the most urgent treatment, and aspirin has been the most widely used for that purpose this century.

Time and time again people find themselves returning to Disprin for relief from common aches and pains - it seems fifty years of pain relief can't be wrong!

THINGS YOU DIDN'T KNOW ABOUT DISPRIN

- Aspirin is the most used drug in the world with 12 billion tablets consumed annually (as per Guinness Book of Records).
- The brand name Disprin was chosen to link the active ingredient "aspirin" with the "dissolving" nature of the product.
- When tested in equal doses, aspirin can be more effective and longer acting than paracetamol in mild to moderate pain.
- Soluble aspirin reaches maximum analgesic levels up to 3 times faster than paracetamol tablets.
- Aspirin can help to ease the aches and pains suffered by plants in the same way that it helps people and animals, according to researchers from Arizona State University, US and Institut de Biologie Moleculaire des Plantes, in Strasbourg, France.