

# Collaboration at Covis leads to continual growth

A profile featuring JIM HALL, Vice President and General Manager for Canada, Covis Pharma



Jim Hall says that as a start-up, collaborating with external partners has been critical to Covis' growth. Left to right; Dean Guitard, Brian Cousins (Biotext Pharma), Katherine Shilhan (Impres Pharma), Ron Clark, Darren Brimson, Jim Hall, Melissa Lamont (Biotext Pharma).

## What was your career path leading to your appointment as General Manager of Covis Pharma?

I started my career in big pharma: Searle, Pharmacia, AstraZeneca, Roche, Astellas. These were great companies to work for. While there, I learned a ton, met some amazing people, and had a lot of fun. In 2016, I was given the opportunity to lead Aralez Canada, a small specialty pharma company. This was a tremendous learning experience and a significant challenge. I had complete profit and loss responsibility with all functions reporting directly to me. I learned how to operate within a venture-capital-backed publicly traded company, reporting to a board of directors; understanding the importance and challenge of managing a manufacturing and supply chain; effectively engaging in business development activities and partnerships; and dealing with the issues and challenges in defending intellectual property. Thankfully, I was working with some amazing people who I never doubted could get the job done. I highly recommend working for a small or startup company. You are incredibly close to customers and the business and feel that you are having a meaningful impact on the business every day.

**Jim Hall**

Vice-President  
General Manager



**? When was the last time you did something for the first time? What did you do?**

I hiked to Machu Pichu on June 3rd.

**? Tell us something most people don't know about you.**

I married Sir John A. Macdonald's great, great, great niece. She possesses his negotiating skills!

**? If you could eliminate one thing from your daily schedule, what would it be?**

It used to be my commute, which was 45 minutes. Now it's two minutes – check!

**? If you weren't in the pharmaceutical industry, what would you be doing and why?**

Teaching. I'm currently a seasonal professor at McMaster University and would like to do more at some point. I enjoy the challenge. Meeting and interacting with young, ambitious people is very rewarding. Seeing some of them take up careers in pharma is even more rewarding.

**? Other than a family member, on a flight who would you like to be seated beside and what would you ask them?**

Jesus Christ. I would ask: Is there other life in the universe? What happens when we die?

**? What are the top three things remaining on your bucket list?**

Play ice hockey with my grandchildren (I need some first), learn how to kayak in class III or IV whitewater, go heli-skiing.

**? What have you already crossed off your bucket list?**

Hike up Machu Pichu (just), canoe down the Nahanni River with my son, canoe trip in Quetico Provincial Park with two great friends, walk my first daughter down the aisle, see a total eclipse with my astrophysicist daughter, play ice hockey into my 50s, have a great career in pharma, marry the love of my life!

**? If you could travel back to a specific time and place, when and where would you choose to visit?**

My dad's hometown in 1943.

**? Is there anything you can't live without?**

Old Dutch barbecue chips, ice hockey, my family, God.

**? If you were to compete in the Olympics, what would be your event?**

Men's moguls.

**? What's your favourite hobby? Are you any good at it?**

Ice Hockey, and I used to be.



Hall says he is very pleased to be revisiting some previous working relationships in his current role. Shown here, left to right; Darren Brimson, Jim Hall, Dean Guitard, Ron Clark.

After three years in this role, I felt ready to take on the new challenge of leading a startup organization in Canada. I started as vice-president and general manager of Covis Pharma Canada in January of this year. At that time it was just me and two amazing products: Alvesco and Omnaris.

We are now up to three employees, having added Ron Clark as our senior director of operations, and Dean Guitard as our director of sales. The three of us have worked together in the past, and it's a real thrill to be working together again on this amazing opportunity.

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We partnered with Impres Pharma to set up our sales organization. We have hired 15 highly capable medical sales representatives across the country to promote Alvesco and Omnaris. We had our launch meeting in early April, and are anxiously awaiting our first report on results!

Partnering is a critical element of our commercial strategy. As a startup, we need to be lean, agile and efficient. Collaborating with external partners has been critical for us in getting off to a quick and effective start. Along with Impres, we have partnered with Biotext Solutions Inc. for marketing support, Pangaea Group for trade, and Accelera Canada Ltd. for strategic planning and patient access.

## Give us an overview of Covis Pharma's history internationally and in Canada?

Covis Pharma is a privately-held fully integrated global specialty pharmaceutical company focused on optimizing branded products and executing select low-risk product development initiatives. We currently market 11 branded products and three authorized generics with a therapeutic focus in respiratory and allergy, anchored by Alvesco, which is sold in more than 55 markets globally.

At Covis, our paramount concern is patients' outcomes as we focus on improving the health of people with serious medical conditions. Covis Pharma was founded by Cerberus Capital and Management in 2011. Since its inception, the company has consummated more than 15 transactions. In 2015 we divested 12 products for \$1.2 billion. More recently in December 2018, Covis acquired global rights to Alvesco, Omnaris and Zetonna, establishing a presence as a global company virtually overnight. Alvesco and Omnaris are incredible products, and they have been very well received, being given the same positive reaction as our entry into the market. Currently, Alvesco is the number one prescribed inhaled corticosteroid for asthma by respirologists in Canada.

Canada is number two globally for Covis in terms of sales and volume. Hence, we have a significant role to play in the overall success of the company.

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## How would you describe your leadership style and the environment you are attempting to create at this new company to Canada?

I would like to think that I have an open and transparent leadership style. I think it's important to share as much as possible with employees, and to be available whenever the need arises. Integrity is of paramount importance. To me that means being genuine, and telling the whole truth. My general life philosophy is play to win, work hard, have fun, and reward performance. Finally, I think it's important to have 'harmony' in your life. Work is just one facet of what we do, and of what defines us. The other components (family, health, spiritual etc) must all get the required amount of attention. I hope that by leading this way, it will result in a culture at Covis with similar attributes.

## What key business objectives and priorities have you established for Covis over the short and the long term?

Of course it is paramount for us to achieve our earnings and revenue objectives. We will achieve this by securing and growing our current base in the short term, and expanding into new segments in the longer term. Our goal is to continue to punch above our weight in the global arena. Corporately, the intention is to acquire more respiratory products and expand into other therapeutic areas where it makes sense. At the end of the day, we would like to establish Covis as a leading Canadian specialty pharma company.

## What are the major issues you see facing the Canadian industry?

I don't think what I have to say should be a surprise to anyone in the industry. Public perception is a key issue, that to me seems to be getting worse despite the industry's efforts to make improvements. Expected new pricing regulations are very concerning, and, in my view, have the real possibility of discouraging new companies from entering Canada, or from new drugs being introduced into Canada altogether. Finally, demonstrating value of our products, particularly to payers, remains a challenge. On the flip side, I feel that Canada is still a very attractive market: its strong economy, political stability, and growing and aging population all translate into a positive business environment. **CPM**