

# Irish expertise will continue to attract pharma/bioscience firms

IRELAND'S pool of experienced scientists and engineers will continue to attract pharmaceutical and bioscience companies, according to one industry expert.

Lorcan McGarry is general manager with Hovione, the Portuguese bioscience company which will occupy the site soon to be vacated by Pfizer in Loughbeg, Ringaskiddy, Co. Cork. The company will employ 70 to 80 people initially, many of them ex-Pfizer, with that number likely to double within a year or two.

Founded in 1959, Hovione has enjoyed 8-10% growth annually in recent years. It also has operations in New Jersey, as well as Macau and Zhejiang in China.

Hovione's primary business in Cork will focus on providing early stage product development and API (active pharmaceutical ingredient) services to other pharma companies.

APIs are the core beneficial element in any drug or treatment. As such, they are high value and low volume products, which are then exported to another company to formulate.

For an island country like Ireland, where shipping costs are always a factor, API development is a value added side of the biosciences, and a good fit for the nation's knowledge economy ambitions.

"The API side of the business has expanded really well in recent years," said Lorcan McGarry. "All available capacities at Hovione's other sites will be filled in the near future, so the company wanted to acquire another site, and this Pfizer site became available at the right time."

"Ireland is one of the primary sites in the world for the manufacture of APIs, and ideal for this side of Hovione's business. The Cork site will manufacture APIs. For instance, some highly skilled researchers with a US-based re-



Lorcan McGarry, general manager, Hovione, Cork Airport Business Park: Ireland's pool of experienced scientists and engineers will continue to attract pharmaceutical and bioscience companies.

Picture: Orlan Kelly

search company might find a new molecule. They might need help developing a commercial route for a compound, and manufacturing for phase one, two and three clinical trials.

"This will be the focus of the Cork operation, manufacturing material for clinical trials. Hovione has a wide customer range. The Cork plant also has an excellent Niro spray dryer, so it will also provide spray drying services. We will work with research-based organisations, mostly non-Irish companies."

Hovione offers advanced technologies as well as APIs for drug delivery systems, from oral to in-

jectable and from inhalation to topical applications.

Specialising in complex chemistry and particle engineering, Hovione provides services related to the development, manufacture and pre-formulation of both new chemical entities (NCEs) and existing APIs for off-patent products.

While Hovione were clearly drawn to Loughbeg to draw from Pfizer's experienced staff, the company is also currently recruiting high profile roles such as chemists, manufacturing, environmental and quality officers, technical services, plus senior HR and admin personnel. Hovione is

confident not only in its own success, but also in the future success of industry in Ireland.

"Things are gloomy across all industries, but Ireland still has a solid reputation for having good, experienced people available, particularly in this sector," said Lorcan McGarry. "A lot of people have said to us already that it is good to see a company like Hovione coming to Ireland, and to see the Pfizer factory being taken over so quickly."

"Hovione has a good business model. It has a different type of model than the ones we have seen here in the past, this aspect of outsourcing a certain manu-

facturing requirement to a third party. Hovione could have located anywhere in the world, yet they chose here. It is great for Ireland."

Lorcan McGarry brings a lot of experience to his role as general manager with Hovione. He previously held management roles with Pfizer, with Flaislow in Little Island, which was acquired by Warner Lambert.

In 2000, Warner Lambert was taken over by Pfizer, bringing Lorcan McGarry full circle. He is now managing the transition from Pfizer to Hovione.

While Hovione is a household name for API expertise, the company's global activities range from new product generation, anti-inflammatory treatments, inhaled technologies, particle design.

The company also produces cGMP manufacturing units, and provides a range of project management, technology transfer, validation and quality control to support its API and other manufacturing services.