

## Therion gets CEO with French connection

**Mark Leuchtenberger, CEO,  
Therion Biologics Corp.**

### THE DETAILS

**Age:** 45

**Education:** B.A., English, Wake Forest University; MBA, Yale School of Management

Mark Leuchtenberger is tackling his first chief executive officer position with Therion Biologics Corp. of Cambridge.

But he is not a novice.

Leuchtenberger most recently served as vice president international at Biogen Inc., where he led all commercial operations outside of North America.

He directed the biotech giant's independent business unit based in Paris, building European staff from 75 to 300 within three years.

The experience "helped me earn the stripes I needed in order to do this job well," Leuchtenberger said.

Leuchtenberger, who holds an undergraduate degree from Wake Forest University and an MBA from the Yale School of Management, did not originally set out to be a biotech executive.

The Buffalo, N.Y., native worked at Bain and Co. earlier in his career. As a senior consultant specializing in health care products and services, he watched many colleagues leave to join the then 10-year-old biotech industry.

"It was still fairly new," Leuchtenberger said. "It began to be very intriguing."

Leuchtenberger's opportunity to move into the field came in 1990, when he joined Biogen as a product manager for early-stage programs.

There is a reason for his 11-

year career at the company.

"Biogen has been a fantastic growth story," Leuchtenberger said.

Each time an opportunity to move on would arise, Biogen would provide him with a new challenge.

He served as program executive for Amevive, the company's psoriasis product, prior to leading the launch of Avonex, Biogen's blockbuster multiple sclerosis treatment.

During the past five years, Leuchtenberger has directed North American sales and marketing as well as developing the company's international market. He quadrupled U.S. sales of Avonex and extended market leadership from North America to Europe.

Leuchtenberger said that of all his accomplishments so far, he is most proud to be associated with Avonex.

"We've changed these people's (patients') lives," he said. "Those things are lasting."

Leuchtenberger's Paris years represent a lot of hard work but enjoyment too. He has fond memories even of the daily drive to work, which led him through the picturesque *Bois de Bologne*. His wife still is going through "Paris withdrawal," he said.

Upon his return from abroad, Leuchtenberger applied to Therion because he hoped to return to the excitement of creating strategy for early-stage drugs.

"My desire was to be part of that product development story again," he said.

Therion, which has 14 candidates in the clinic, is focused on the development of

therapeutic cancer vaccines and preventative AIDS vaccines.

Leuchtenberger said he immediately was impressed with the number of potential products.

"It's almost an iceberg phenomenon," he said, noting how many other candidates exist beneath the leaders.

The company's most advanced product, Prostavac-VF is in Phase II trials for prostate cancer.

Leuchtenberger said he hopes to move Prostavac with a booster component into Phase III trials by the end of next year.

Prostavac targets the PSA protein found in prostate cancers. Studies have shown that the vaccine stabilizes PSA for more than six months in cancer patients.

In addition to moving products forward into the clinic, Leuchtenberger plans on building an infrastructure that can take products into the marketplace.

Founder Dennis Panicali has served as CEO since the company's beginnings 11 years ago. He now is taking on the role of chief scientific officer to more actively direct expansion of the product pipeline.

"As the company moves aggressively into late-stage product development and commercialization, his (Leuchtenberger's) experience and skills will be invaluable in guiding this transformation," Panicali said.

— *Adria Cimino*

