

Annual DSN roundtables draw record crowd

Antoinette Alexander

NEW YORK — Walgreens. Costco. CVS Caremark. Rite Aid. H-E-B. Wegmans. Kerr Drug. The list goes on. In all, it was a veritable who's who of retailing as Drug Store News' annual Industry Issues Summit, which also included a Specialty Pharmacy Roundtable and Diabetes Roundtable, attracted more than 200 attendees — a new attendance record — and featured the most diverse retail panelists to date.

The day-long event was held on Nov. 30 in New York at the New York Athletic Club. During the 12th annual Industry Issues Summit, the eighth annual Diabetes Roundtable and the second annual Specialty Pharmacy Roundtable (presented by DSN and Armada Healthcare), retailer and supplier panelists discussed an array of hot-button issues, including biosimilars, product innovation, SKU rationalization, private label and social media.

“Private brand is obviously a key focus right now, with the economy [and] consumers demanding value. But how does a supplier provide a brand that protects themselves to some extent?” said panelist Robert Bobber, divisional merchandise manager of over the counter for Walgreens, when asked about private label during the Industry Issues Summit panel discussion. “There's really two strategies for private brand: One is to drive profit, and the second is to drive loyalty. So when you can find the solution that drives those two things — profit and loyalty — that is what will help preserve a brand.”

When asked about SKU rationalization, panelist Jason Reiser, VP health and wellness and operations/compliance for Sam's Club, told attendees, “We weren't the only ones to SKU [rationalize], but I think we've proven that frustrating the customer doesn't work. ... [However], it gets back to true innovation versus line extensions, and that is where the line needs to be drawn.”

This year, Larry Kudlow, CNBC anchor of “The Kudlow Report,” was the guest speaker. He discussed his outlook for the U.S. economy, advocating deficit reduction, deregulation and a strong dollar to promote economic growth.

Retail panelists included Craig Norman of H-E-B, Michael Feuer of Max-Wellness, Vic Curtis of Costco, Reiser of Sam's Club, Ken Goodgame of Ace Hardware, Bobber of Walgreens, Tony Montini of Rite Aid, Barbara Zamudio of Ulta Beauty, Mike Petocchi of Wegmans, Beth Arkes of Fred Meyer, Leon Nevers of H-E-B, Debbie Krasnow of Giant Eagle, Bill Bergin of Rite Aid, Mark Gregory of Kerr Drug and John Carlo of Wegmans.

Specialty pharmacy provider panelists included Jeanne Ann Stasny of Walmart Specialty Pharmacy, Nick Calla of Walgreens Specialty Pharmacy, Tim Kaplan of Amber Pharmacy, Anthony Davino of Armada Healthcare, Sharon Ferrer of BioPlus Specialty Pharmacy, Robert Roose of Bioscrip, Nick Saraniti of Commcare Pharmacy, Albert Thigpen of CVS Caremark, Phil Hagerman of Diplomat Specialty Pharmacy, John Musil of The Apothecary Shops, Burt Zweigenhaft of OncoMed and Lee Merritt of MedfusionRx.

Sponsors included Teva Neuroscience, Takeda, Endo Pharmaceuticals, Catalina Marketing, Alberto-Culver, Novartis, Pharmavite, Hyland's, Kao Brands, GlaxoSmithKline, Pacific World, TABS Group, Sanofi-Aventis, Colgate and Nipro Diagnostics.

See the March 14, 2011, issue of DSN for the complete transcript.