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West Pharmaceutical Services, Inc. (WST)

BofA Securities Health Care Conference

CORPORATE PARTICIPANTS

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Quintin John Lai

Vice President-Strategy & Investor Relations, West Pharmaceutical Services, Inc.

OTHER PARTICIPANTS

Michael Ryskin

Analyst, BofA Securities, Inc.

MANAGEMENT DISCUSSION SECTION

[Abrupt Start]

Michael Ryskin

Analyst, BofA Securities, Inc.

...Head of Investor Relations. Gentlemen, thanks for joining us.

Bernard J. Birkett

Senior Vice President and Chief Financial Officer, West Pharmaceutical Services, Inc.

Thank you and thanks for the invite. It's good to be here.

QUESTION AND ANSWER SECTION

Michael Ryskin

Analyst, BofA Securities, Inc.

Q

It's great to have you. I guess just our standard question to kick things off. 1Q results came in ahead of expectations. You had an overall organic decline of negative 3%. You maintained the organic guide for the year for revenues, but you raised the EPS by \$0.13. A couple of moving pieces in that. Could you just give us an update on how 1Q played out relative to your expectations?

Bernard J. Birkett

Senior Vice President and Chief Financial Officer, West Pharmaceutical Services, Inc.

A

Yeah. 1Q was pretty close to where – we thought it would come in a little bit stronger. We saw some orders that we had expected probably to come in Q2. Customers asked could we produce them in Q1 and deliver them, which we did. So, a good performance based on where we thought we would be and what we were experiencing.

On the EPS side, again, pretty much in line with what we thought it'd be. I think stock-based compensation tax benefit was in there and that layered into the overall change in guidance for the full year. But we reaffirmed for 2024. The cadence that we talked about in February still holds true for what we're seeing materialize as we move through the year. So, first half a little bit weaker than the second half, and we haven't changed our view on that at this point.

Michael Ryskin

Analyst, BofA Securities, Inc.

Q

Okay. And then, anything you can say in terms of order books, how things have trended, visibility into end markets? I know it's a little volatile week-to-week, month-to-month, but...

Bernard J. Birkett

Senior Vice President and Chief Financial Officer, West Pharmaceutical Services, Inc.

A

Yeah. I think it's the same as what we've been communicating over the last couple of months. As we move into the second half of the year, when we look at our orders on hand as a percent of forecast for the second half of the year, that's trending a little bit ahead of where we were at this point in time in 2019, pre-COVID. So, we've seen that continue as we've moved through the last number of months. So, again, no change there. And that ties into how we're guiding for the year.

Michael Ryskin

Analyst, BofA Securities, Inc.

Q

Okay. All right. And probably the high debate point on the stock these days is destocking situation. What you're seeing in the end market? We've heard mixed commentary from some of your other packaging component manufacturers. Could you give us an update into visibility into customer levels? How do you manage that? And how do you gain confidence that you've got a good sense of what's going on there?

Bernard J. Birkett

Senior Vice President and Chief Financial Officer, West Pharmaceutical Services, Inc.

A

Yeah. So, we are constantly in communication with our customers assessing where they are, what is their demand, what is the timing of that demand. So, that's an ongoing process. And then, we correlate that to what we're seeing in actual orders coming through. As I just mentioned, as we were seeing what's coming through in the back half of the year and does all of that tie together. But again, it's evolving. It's something that we monitor very closely.

Michael Ryskin*Analyst, BofA Securities, Inc.*

Okay.

Q

Quintin John Lai*Vice President-Strategy & Investor Relations, West Pharmaceutical Services, Inc.*

And, Mike, maybe I'll just add to that, because we've had some questions earlier this – today, customer concentration with respect to this destocking. And what we've seen is that it's across the board for us. It's pharma companies. It's generic companies. It's biologic companies. There isn't a single customer that we would call out as being an overly impactful in destocking. It's several customers, which makes it more of a sector-wide trend that we're seeing and not just specific to a customer or customers.

A

Michael Ryskin*Analyst, BofA Securities, Inc.*

Okay. And what – looking back, now we see that situation unfold, what do you think drove the excess inventory levels and these customers build up in 2023? Was it concerns on supply chain or availability of products?

Q

Bernard J. Birkett*Senior Vice President and Chief Financial Officer, West Pharmaceutical Services, Inc.*

Yeah, part of it was driven by our own lead times that actually had pushed out over the last number of years. So, that would have influenced how some customers were looking at us, what level of safety stocks they believe they needed to hold. I think the supply chain, again, in and of itself over the last number of years influenced the level of stock that people needed to and wanted to carry. I think that's shifting a little bit now. As our lead times have come down, we've added in more capacity. We're back to more normal levels of supply.

A

And then, when we look at our customers, they're also looking at their levels of safety stock at this point in time and now what's appropriate for them. So, there are a number of factors. There's like working capital and inventory management in there also. So, I don't think it's just one driver. I think there are a number of factors influencing it.

Michael Ryskin*Analyst, BofA Securities, Inc.*

Okay. And you just touched on your own lead times getting better. Would you say that all the manufacturing and all the logistics, that's all been worked out and is sort of back to pre-COVID levels or are there still any pockets where it's elevated?

Q

Bernard J. Birkett*Senior Vice President and Chief Financial Officer, West Pharmaceutical Services, Inc.*

For all intents and purposes, it's back to pre-COVID levels. We have seen, obviously, COVID itself and the pressures that put on our business has dissipated. We've added in capacity into certain areas of business, which are growth-driven and primarily within the high-value product segment across five different manufacturing plants.

A

And that's enabled us to bring those lead times down. And now, it also enables us to respond to pickup in demand when that comes to allow us to maintain the lead times that we're currently experiencing. So, it's not to drive lead times back up to 40, 50 weeks, which is something that we want to avoid.

Michael Ryskin

Analyst, BofA Securities, Inc.

Q

Okay. And when you – as you said, you reiterated the guide on a sales basis – organic sales basis in April. But in January, February, the revision was – a lot of the revision to the guide was tied to that access inventory. As you sit four months later into the year, is your timeline for that inventory drawdown unchanged? Do you still see that returning to normal by the end of the year?

Bernard J. Birkett

Senior Vice President and Chief Financial Officer, West Pharmaceutical Services, Inc.

A

Yeah, based on the information that we have and the indicators that we're getting, that would be the case. So we would expect to see things improve as we move through the year and quarter-over-quarter.

Michael Ryskin

Analyst, BofA Securities, Inc.

Q

Okay. All right. One of the other bits you've been talking more and more about in recent conferences is Annex 1 regulatory rule in Europe that's gotten a lot of noise. Could you just provide a little more clarity, where you would see the benefit from that? Is that incremental or that different than other regulatory changes you've seen in the past and just sort of how it benefits you specifically?

Quintin John Lai

Vice President-Strategy & Investor Relations, West Pharmaceutical Services, Inc.

A

So Annex 1 is a lot of focus on improving the quality of injectable drugs, especially on contamination and particulates, which means that you're going to be affecting the manufacture, the fill/finish, the final package, all of those things can contribute to improving the quality. We've had some customers who have been looking at the proposed changes that were talked about and we're proactive and started to look at their processes, especially processes of older drugs that used legacy components, legacy processes, and have in the process – or in the process of looking to upgrade. And we even cited one customer who's in that process right now.

Since the Annex 1 has been put into place, we have seen a marked increase in the number of customer orders that are initiating projects to take a look at their products and their processes for upgrades. And so it was – so we called that out on the April call, quite a big uptake. As we review all those different projects, it is interesting that each customer, each drug has got a specific case. And so that's why they're starting a dialogue with us so that they can understand on the component side what they could be doing, whether it be moving their legacy component from bulk to wash-sterilized or maybe even moving that legacy component to a more modern formulation wash-sterilized, Envision, or maybe even to [ph] coding (00:09:16).

So it really is something that we're just at the start of right now. It does play into our overall thesis in that the bar for quality continues to only move upward. The regulators are only moving that bar upward. And we think that there is, and we have said in a while that there's a long runway for HVP conversion in our business.

Michael Ryskin

Analyst, BofA Securities, Inc.

Q

So taking everything you just said, what is the timeline we should be thinking about here? I mean, these are – a lot of these products are spec-ed in. You're not going to flip a switch and change overnight. So how do we think about Annex 1 playing out?

Quintin John Lai

Vice President-Strategy & Investor Relations, West Pharmaceutical Services, Inc.

A

So I think that, again, because it's not just the component, it could very well also be a clean room. It could be a restricted access barrier or an isolator that has to be put in. There are other pieces that have to go along with the ecosystem that there will be a component of time to go into it. So what we're doing is that we're preparing, we're working with those customers, we're making sure that we have the capacity so that as customers start to switch that we don't see any kind of slugs in our lead time like we had a couple years ago. And so if you look at a lot of our capacity that we've been putting in and continue to put in, a lot of it is a focus on HVP processing.

Bernard J. Birkett

Senior Vice President and Chief Financial Officer, West Pharmaceutical Services, Inc.

A

Yes. I think it's an important point that we don't expect a big bang event with this. It'll layer in over time. It could take a couple of years for people to convert. I think they're going to look at probably looking at new molecules coming to the market, what does it mean for those, looking at existing platforms, how do they transition. So it is going to take time, but as Quintin said, we have been layering in capacity around specific processes to support the change. And that's something that we continuously evaluate to understand do we have that right capacity because we don't want to essentially commit to a customer and not be able to deliver on it and then to delay any implementation. So that's something that we have worked very closely with our customers on. But again, it is going to take time.

Michael Ryskin

Analyst, BofA Securities, Inc.

Q

Okay. And Annex 1 is a Europe phenomenon, but you're a global company and your customers are global customers, right? So how do you – how are they balancing that? Are they really going with two approaches where we're going to do this in Europe and this in the US or are they just saying the bar got moved here, so we might as well raise it here, everywhere else?

Bernard J. Birkett

Senior Vice President and Chief Financial Officer, West Pharmaceutical Services, Inc.

A

Yeah, typically we would see that it will be – that they would switch to one that they're – we don't see them having two different solutions coming from us. So I think it will be a global platform change rather than specific to a region. It's the way we would read it now.

Michael Ryskin

Analyst, BofA Securities, Inc.

Q

Okay. All right. And sort of taking that and folding it into the LRP and the long-term outlook for the business. There – when we think about how West is positioned, you've got a couple tailwinds. You got the evolution of higher value products. You've got tailwinds from GLP-1, which we haven't touched on yet. You've got Annex 1 rolling in, high regulation, headwinds. You've got destocking inventory, everything that's up in the last couple of years, some volatility in pricing, that's sort of obscuring the underlying demand. Taking these two offsetting pieces, how do you – sitting here, how do you reevaluate your LRP and your view of the underlying market growth?

Bernard J. Birkett*Senior Vice President and Chief Financial Officer, West Pharmaceutical Services, Inc.*

A

Yeah, we continue to look at our LRP in that 7% to 9% range. We don't see a need to really move up that at the moment and we'll have to see how things materialize. It's really we're focusing on three different areas. We got volume – there's volume growth based into that. There's a level of pricing and then also you've got mix shift. So there's three different drivers. And we believe that that's confident in us as we look into the long term and we just get through 2023, 2024.

Michael Ryskin*Analyst, BofA Securities, Inc.*

Q

Okay. And talking about in your prior answer on Annex 1, you touched a lot on capacity, ensuring you have the capacity and making sure that lead times and supply chain doesn't get messed up as volume comes back. You guided to \$350 million of CapEx this year. You've had elevated CapEx or heavy CapEx for a number of years. How much of that is already sort of spoken for in terms of Annex 1 and things like that or how much incremental CapEx do you think you'll need going forward to position yourself for that?

Bernard J. Birkett*Senior Vice President and Chief Financial Officer, West Pharmaceutical Services, Inc.*

A

Yeah. I think if we look at the next number of years, I think once we get over layering in this level of capacity and we're doing it both in our proprietary business and we've had some incremental capacity adds within our contract manufacturing business, which will be coming online in 2025, we would expect that we would be coming back to maybe like kind of probably 6% to 7%, maybe 8% range on CapEx as a percent of revenues, which is typically what we were doing pre-COVID. But again, a lot of the – the vast majority of the CapEx that we've been layering in over the last number of years has really been driven by growth initiatives and future demand that we're seeing from customers and primarily concentrated in the high-value product space.

Michael Ryskin*Analyst, BofA Securities, Inc.*

Q

So, as you layer that in ahead of future demand, sort of how much lead time do you need, how much visibility do you need? So, let's say you're putting – let's say you start digging today, what is that intended for? Is that intended to feed 2026 demand, 2028?

Bernard J. Birkett*Senior Vice President and Chief Financial Officer, West Pharmaceutical Services, Inc.*

A

Yeah. If we start it today, you're typically looking at 2026 and beyond. If it's equipment only, it could be 12 to 24 months by the time you get it specced out, delivered, validated and in production. And then if you're looking at doing any modifications to facilities and stuff, it can add time to that.

So, that's why it's important for us to be always investing ahead of the curve, because what we're trying to avoid is getting into these lead time problems that we've encountered over the last couple years. So, it's really to make sure that we're in a place to capture any of these opportunities as and when they present themselves and not kind of having to do it after the fact.

Michael Ryskin*Analyst, BofA Securities, Inc.*

Q

Okay. So ,then just to play devil's advocate on that, if you're investing that far ahead of time, how do you ensure you have confidence in the fact that you're not going have too much capacity, that the demand will be there two, three years down the road? What's the visibility there?

Bernard J. Birkett

Senior Vice President and Chief Financial Officer, West Pharmaceutical Services, Inc.

A

Yeah. So, typically, what we're able to see is our volume growth is pretty consistent among our various business segments. And then, there are specific areas of opportunity that we have had a lot of conversation with our customers about to get levels of insights as to what they're expecting, where and when they need product, and then making sure together that we have the capacity in place. The capacity that we layer in is never really specifically just for one customer. It's agnostic. So, we can use it across multiple customers, multiple products. So, it's not dedicated to any one particular area. So, we have that level of flexibility as well.

Michael Ryskin

Analyst, BofA Securities, Inc.

Q

Okay. And then the other question we often get is competitive landscape differentiation versus some of your peers and some of your counterparts. And that kind of gets the point of moat and share shifts. How would you characterize those dynamics?

Quintin John Lai

Vice President-Strategy & Investor Relations, West Pharmaceutical Services, Inc.

A

Well, I think that what we focus on is what do our customers look for in a primary package supplier, and the number one parameter is quality, especially now with all the regulatory changes going on, quality was always number one and it's now just further number one. Number two and three, I think number two right now is scale, availability, because even though they are doing inventory management now, I think the whole world understands how fragile supply chains can be. And they want to make sure, are you going to be ready and are you going to be ready in the places that we're selling drug, which means Europe, North America, Asia.

And then, if you take a look at our footprint, we have HVP in all of those areas. We also have manufacturing in South America. So, again, that's – we think scale, availability is super critical. Science and regulatory support, super important, because as these regulatory changes occur on legacy products, you may have to do upgrades and you have to do re-filings, and what team is going to be able to sit there and go through all that paperwork and all that testing and stability.

And so those are the three areas that we typically focus on and we think that that is where our competitive advantage is. The other suppliers in the space are doing the same, but, again, they do it at a little bit different scale than we do.

Michael Ryskin

Analyst, BofA Securities, Inc.

Q

Okay. And taking those factors you called out, quality, scale, the science and regulatory support, where does that lead you when it comes to price? How much of a lever is price and how does that – how do you see that changing going forward?

Bernard J. Birkett

Senior Vice President and Chief Financial Officer, West Pharmaceutical Services, Inc.

A

Yeah. So, in the past, we were getting 1% to 2% on price. Right now, we're targeting in the 2% to 3% range. I think in the first quarter, we were a little bit ahead of that. Last year was a bit of an anomaly. Because of inflation, we were passing on some of those inflationary cost increases that we were getting, but we would typically look at the 2% to 3%. It's different in different parts of our business. Some parts are more price-sensitive than others.

And when we're looking at these relationships with customers, we're also looking at long-term partnerships. So we also need to kind of provide a level of visibility around price to customers and to make sure that those price increases are sustainable over time.

Michael Ryskin

Analyst, BofA Securities, Inc.

Q

Okay. Actually, I was going to ask on your relationship with pharma and biotech. That's a good transition. You've obviously had very long-standing relationship with a lot of your customers and partners. Have those conversations changed in recent quarters or recent years in terms of their portfolio shifts or maybe some competitive landscape shifts? Just sort of like what's the relationship with the bigger sponsors out there?

Quintin John Lai

Vice President-Strategy & Investor Relations, West Pharmaceutical Services, Inc.

A

So I think that the opportunity for us to – especially with some of the things that are going on with the regulatory environment, we have seen some customers look at their portfolio and are looking to say, okay, given the situation, how should we manage it? Should we just be managing it drug-by-drug or should we be moving to a platform approach? And these are not easy decisions because what you're talking about is potentially opening up drug filings, relooking and maybe having to modify that drug filing to go to something that would be like a Westar Select type quality where you can use our network as opposed to maybe as being specified to a formulation, a site, but there are some benefits to that. And the benefits are availability, being able to source it from various places within our network.

And so our teams have had very constructive discussions as we've been going along that pathway. Put into context, we work in an industry that has a very high inertia level. Change doesn't come quickly to these things. Once you're spec-ed in, you typically are spec-ed in and you don't want to change it. But those are the kind of discussions that we're having. And then, as well as talking about their new drugs, their new pipeline, having those type of discussions. And then that's where we are able to come in with our even higher level products, such as NovaPure, Crystal Zenith, our delivery devices.

And then also is introducing the concept that we're trying to pioneer, which is the integrated systems, because we think that that could be the next frontier for offerings where you are now creating these packages of glass elastomer that are designed to work with each other. And again, that's something that they're looking further down the pipeline.

Michael Ryskin

Analyst, BofA Securities, Inc.

Q

Okay. That's helpful. Bernard, a couple for you on the P&L and margin dynamics in the quarter and as you go through the year. You've got a pretty steep ramp built-in, but a lot of that is just tied to volume leverage, there's some tied to mix. Could you take us through the moving pieces as we think about what happened in 1Q and how that trends through the rest of the year?

Bernard J. Birkett*Senior Vice President and Chief Financial Officer, West Pharmaceutical Services, Inc.*

A

Yeah. So I think the biggest challenge we had in the first quarter was really volumes. So, we're a volume-dependent business. So, you could see the impact on throughput through some of our facilities and the absorption impact that had on margin. And there was also a mix impact, which we had called out, which was going to happen around some of this destocking.

So, as we move through the year, we do see margins improving through higher levels of production and the mix shift being addressed, more high-value products coming through. So, that ties into greater revenue growth, but also margin expansion. And I think if you look back at the last number of years when we were driving a lot of margin improvement, it was really higher volumes around higher value products. And that shows the power of it once it kicks in. So, once we transition into the back half of the year, that's what we should see materialize.

Michael Ryskin*Analyst, BofA Securities, Inc.*

Q

Okay. And as you said, a lot of that multiyear margin runway comes from the HVP.

Bernard J. Birkett*Senior Vice President and Chief Financial Officer, West Pharmaceutical Services, Inc.*

A

The HVP mix shift is really the biggest driver of the margin expansion, and we see it predominantly within the Biologics market segment. That's where we see the greatest or the highest level of adoption for HVP. Really any customer that's in that space when they're spec'ing in further molecules, they're really looking at HVP. We see – pharma probably is our lowest level of penetration around HVP, but we are seeing some traction there. And then generics, somewhere in the middle, but Biologics is the main driver.

Michael Ryskin*Analyst, BofA Securities, Inc.*

Q

Okay. And when you think about the margin expansion, LRP, the 100 bps annually that comes along with that revenue line, do you feel pretty good about the sustained runway there, given...

Bernard J. Birkett*Senior Vice President and Chief Financial Officer, West Pharmaceutical Services, Inc.*

A

Yeah. And again, it all ties back. It's really driven predominantly by the mix shift within HVP and to HVP. And then, we've already spoken about some of the other drivers as to why that would take place and what supports it. So you have the growth within Biologics itself, then you have things like Annex 1, these regulatory changes, taking people up that HVP curve and getting them on to it. So, that sustains that margin expansion. And then, there's a little bit of OpEx leverage, but it's primarily around mix shift.

Michael Ryskin*Analyst, BofA Securities, Inc.*

Q

I mean, given the factors you talked about, Annex 1, mix shift within your customers, is there an opportunity for the shift to HVPs to accelerate even further? I mean, it's been going on for years and years. But given some of the changes you're seeing in the end market, would you see another step higher there?

Bernard J. Birkett*Senior Vice President and Chief Financial Officer, West Pharmaceutical Services, Inc.*

A

Typically, we see about 100 bps of volume converting to high-value products on an annual basis. And that's been pretty consistent over the last number of years, if you strip out the COVID dynamic.

Michael Ryskin

Analyst, BofA Securities, Inc.

Yeah.

Bernard J. Birkett

Senior Vice President and Chief Financial Officer, West Pharmaceutical Services, Inc.

And that's what we would expect to continue. Now, something like Annex 1 could accelerate that. But again, you're really looking at the timing around that and trying to predict it, which now it's not something we're prepared to do. So, I think the 100 basis points is something we're comfortable with. And as we've communicated in the past, if we can drive past 100 basis points, yeah, we will.

Michael Ryskin

Analyst, BofA Securities, Inc.

Okay. All right. Too early to call that for now?

Bernard J. Birkett

Senior Vice President and Chief Financial Officer, West Pharmaceutical Services, Inc.

Yeah.

Michael Ryskin

Analyst, BofA Securities, Inc.

Okay. Fair enough. When we think about the balance sheet and some of the uses there, we talked about CapEx. There's always – CapEx, you talk about 6%, 7%, 8% of revs. But the balance sheet is in a pretty good position. Aside from organic investment, innovation and CapEx, can you talk about other capital deployment, whether it's share buybacks or dividends? What's your priority for the cash use?

Bernard J. Birkett

Senior Vice President and Chief Financial Officer, West Pharmaceutical Services, Inc.

Yeah. So, we really concentrate the capital deployment on CapEx and leveraging that, driving a lot of growth. The share buyback, we're really maintaining the share count. That's our primary focus with that. I know for the last, I think, year, we've probably done a little – accelerated on that a little bit. And then really, the next thing for us to do is to look at M&A within certain segments of our business. If we look at areas like drug delivery, it's looking at what opportunities are there, how do we expand that portfolio. So, that is something that we haven't really done in the past, haven't been that active. But I think as we move forward, it's something that we'll look at more closely.

Michael Ryskin

Analyst, BofA Securities, Inc.

What are the opportunities there? Is it more sort of early-stage technologies and IP, or are there any at-scale businesses?

Bernard J. Birkett

Senior Vice President and Chief Financial Officer, West Pharmaceutical Services, Inc.

We don't have anything specific to call out today, but it'll be a combination, I think.

Michael Ryskin*Analyst, BofA Securities, Inc.*

Q

Okay, great. We're nearing the bottom of the session. I'll end with sort of our usual question of, what do you think is most underappreciated or misunderstood about West? Would you like to clarify? Is there anything that's come up in your meetings early in the day that you want to focus on?

Bernard J. Birkett*Senior Vice President and Chief Financial Officer, West Pharmaceutical Services, Inc.*

A

I think people are beginning to and have been appreciating West more in the last couple years than they had in the past and really understanding the story, understanding the regulatory moat around the business, but also the sustained growth potential for an organic business, both on the top and bottom line. And then for us, it's really executing on that story. But I think it shows how sustainable it is over the long haul. And even with – we get the challenges like we're facing right now, but, again, they're really short term. What the growth is there and there are a number of different drivers in the space to do that.

Michael Ryskin*Analyst, BofA Securities, Inc.*

Q

Okay.

Bernard J. Birkett*Senior Vice President and Chief Financial Officer, West Pharmaceutical Services, Inc.*

A

Do you want to add anything?

Quintin John Lai*Vice President-Strategy & Investor Relations, West Pharmaceutical Services, Inc.*

A

No. Again, I agree. We are a life science tools company and we only go as fast as our customers. We have to be ready when our customers are ready. So that means that, by definition, we always have to be a little ahead of the curve and ahead of the demand. And that's our job is to try to stay ahead of the demand, but not get so far ahead that we have a lot of unused capacity. And so we do it through phases of CapEx. And as you've heard in the past, when we have demand that's ahead, we will pull forward those CapEx plans to adjust. And if there's a change in demand on the other side, we also have the ability to push out some of those phases. But that is what we do as a life science tools company.

Michael Ryskin*Analyst, BofA Securities, Inc.*

Got it. Thanks so much, guys. Thanks for coming.

Bernard J. Birkett*Senior Vice President and Chief Financial Officer, West Pharmaceutical Services, Inc.*

Thank you.

Michael Ryskin*Analyst, BofA Securities, Inc.*

Appreciate it. Thank you, everyone.

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