

Improving patient health through Augmented Reality



Getting started is easy

Users can start scanning packaged pharmaceutical products from the Almirall range right from the first FotoFarma app screen or get instructions on how to use the app.

Patients that are taking a pharmaceutical product often want to know more about what they are ingesting than what the information that can be found is detailed inside a product's packaging provides. As the pharmaceutical industry is a highly regulated environment, providing innovative ways in which to do this can be a challenge. However, technological advances such as Augmented Reality are making this possible for one of the world's largest pharmaceutical companies, and helping to transform healthcare by offering greater support tools for patient adherence.

Almirall is an international pharmaceutical company headquartered in Barcelona, Spain with worldwide annual sales nearing one billion euros. The company researches, develops, produces and markets proprietary medicines and medicines under license with the aim of improving people's health and wellbeing, with a focus on four key therapeutic areas: respiratory, autoimmune, dermatological and gastrointestinal diseases. Its products are sold in 70 countries.

Getting information to patients

Almirall was looking to provide additional details about its own products directly to its patients. Due to legal restrictions, Almirall was limited as to what materials they could provide inside a product's packaging. Furthermore, it was not possible to include a quick response code (QR code) on packaging that could have been used to provide information through a patient's smartphone. Therefore, the company was faced with the challenge of providing more information about its products to patients via a pharmaceutical product's packaging without modifying it and all the while adhering to regulatory requirements.

As a solution, Almirall turned to innovative, Augmented Reality technology to offer streamlined and simplified access to information for the end-user. The company's immediate goal was to use image recognition to identify a product and, based on this, provide a patient with readily available information related to the product. The company's end goal was to help improve overall patient health by providing information that can assist a patient in correctly following his or her treatment to optimize patient adherence.



Recognising products fast and effectively
The app guides the user to take photos of pharmaceutical products within the gridlines visible on screen and then uses the photo taken to show instructions and other useful information on the selected product.

Augmented reality provides the solution

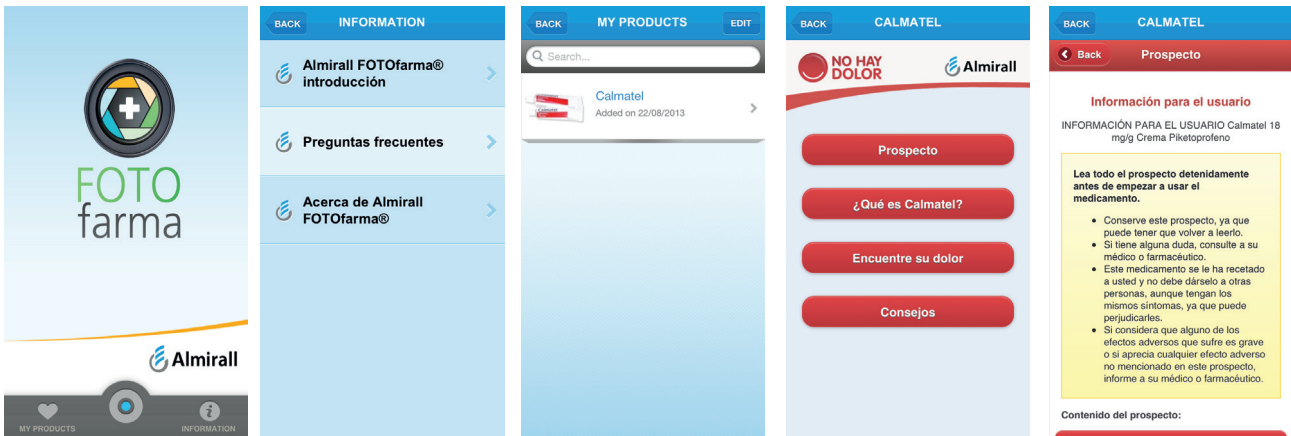
Almirall collaborated with Image Recognition and Augmented Reality specialist Catchoom to create an app that integrated Catchoom's cloud-based image recognition SDK. Catchoom image recognition is designed to let users interact with real world objects in the most natural way possible. A user can simply take a picture of an object with a smartphone and instantly connect to websites, online content, offers, and digital experiences linked to the object in the picture. By integrating Catchoom's technology into the app, Almirall is able to offer patients an app with better image scanning and capture for improved object recognition.

An app is born

The result was FOTOFarma, a mobile app which offers a unique, real-time solution to patients that differs from conventional brochures and available information. FOTOFarma allows, through a photo of the packaging of one of Almirall's products, access to additional information related to that product, such as patient advice, educational videos and instructions, a digital prospectus and other tools. Patients can be made aware of the app and of the augmented pharmaceutical packaging through pop-up banners and special display cabinets in stores.

For Almirall, it was not just a question of programming an app but rather ensuring that the company could satisfy patient needs by turning to new technologies. After a prototype was created, the company tested it with focus groups in order to help identify items to improve prior to its launch for the iPhone in July 2013. The actual development of the app took only a couple of months, with a quick and easy integration of the Catchoom component in a fraction of this time. Currently FOTOFarma is being implemented in Spain for one of Almirall's respiratory products, with the potential to expand to other products and into other European countries.

“FOTOfarma is just another demonstration of the commitment to innovation that Almirall has, by continuing to offer not only products but quality services to the patients who use our products,” said **Javier Granados Alcoceba, eMarketing Manager at Almirall.**



Linking real world objects to digital data

App users can keep track of the pharmaceutical products they require within the app and see a range of information, from dosage guidelines to videos on drug delivery mechanisms.

“While many think of Augmented Reality only in terms of applications for gaming and entertainment, Almíral has demonstrated that futuristic technologies such as this one can be applied to other industries to help get information to people that need it in a more efficient and effective way,” added David Marimon, CEO of Catchoom. “By helping to improve lives with a serious technological application, there is the potential to nurture relationships between patients and pharmaceutical companies and associate the pharma industry with IT innovation. This new technological application also offers the potential to set a standard and become the norm for the pharmaceutical industry as companies begin to use it to communicate critical or important information in a way that is simple and effective for the end user.”

“We are convinced that patients will find this app very useful. At this moment, there is no other similar solution on the market. While currently the app only includes information about Almíral product, we do not reject the option of including information from other pharmaceutical laboratories in the future. This development could be a breakthrough,” concluded **Javier Granados Alcoceba**.