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Turning cannabis into medicine is like making music, says MGC Pharma boss

Musician and DJ Roby Zomer co-founded the company preparing to list on the London market next week

By Julia Bradshaw
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The boss of MGC Pharma said turning cannabis and other plants into pharmaceutical-grade medicines is like making music as the company prepares for a stock market listing next week.

Roby Zomer, co-founder and managing director, is a musician, techno DJ and former sound engineer and has a radio show in Israel.

“I know I am a little different from the mainstream, as I don’t come from the cannabis or pharma industry, but I took my vision and I bound the two, pharma and cannabis, together,” he said.

"I started to read all the literature on what we could do with cannabis, read on Google and started talking to people and understood that if we wanted a real long-term future it could only be if it is a pharmaceutical grade medicine."

According to Mr Zomer, finding a balance between the various active substances and compounds in plants was like making music because you had to work step by step and keep it simple.

“You have the violin, cello, contrabass and drums and you have a symphony where working together is better than each individual part and that is what we are building, you weave together the compounds and get the maximum effect, you get the harmony.”

MGC will be the first medical cannabis company to join the London Stock Exchange when it lists on Tuesday.

The company, founded in 2016 in Israel by Mr Zomer and two other entrepreneurs, is already listed in Sydney. For its London listing it has secured £6.5m from investors including Chelverton Asset Management and wealthy family offices.



MGC chief executive Romy Zomer

It will use the money to fund late-stage clinical trials for two of its lead products: a treatment for epilepsy derived from cannabis; and a treatment for Covid made from artemisinin - a compound derived from the sweet wormwood plant, curcumin, derived from turmeric and frankincense.

Although it is listed in Australia, MGC carries out most of its R&D and manufacturing in Europe. It has a facility in Slovenia and cultivates its cannabis plants there, in the Czech Republic and in Macedonia.

“The reason why we have operations there and not in other European countries is because it is affordable, the cost of cultivation is more cost-effective and allows us to make a product to a high standard that is affordable for consumers,” said Mr Zomer.

Mr Zomer said MGC decided on a UK listing because the LSE is Europe's largest stock market and offers considerable scope for raising funds.

He said GW Pharmaceuticals, a British biotech success story that on Wednesday was [acquired for more than \\$7bn](#), is an example of the sort of company MGC would like to become.

“The dialogue with investors was very mature and knowledgeable,” Mr Zomer said. “I saw a lot of understanding for what we are doing, they embraced our story and our agenda. One of the reasons I preferred London was because it was home to the first cannabis pharmaceutical company .”