Although AbbVie is feeling the impact of Humira biosimilar launch in Europe, its strong immunology pipeline is likely to protect its hold on the plaque psoriasis (PsO) and rheumatoid arthritis (RA) markets, according to GlobalData , a leading data and analytics company.

According to GlobalData 's reports, ' Plaque Psoriasis: Global Drug Forecast and Market Analysis to 2027' and ' Rheumatoid Arthritis: Global Drug Forecast and Market Analysis to 2027 ', Humira biosimilars will garner sales of $440.8m and $2.50bn in the PsO and RA indications, respectively, in the seven major markets (7MM*) by 2027.

In AbbVie's fourth quarter (Q4) earnings call on 25 January 2019, although the company increased its Humira biosimilar erosion estimates for 2019 (now 30–31%), GlobalData Pharma Analysts, Vikesh Devlia PhD and Rose Joachim PhD, do not foresee much additional erosion until Humira loses patent protection in other major markets.

During the call, AbbVie disclosed its plans to absorb losses from biosimilar erosion through the imminent launch of several new therapeutic programs. According to an analysts at GlobalData , two of these drugs in particular, selective JAK1 inhibitor–upadacitinib and anti-IL-17 biologic–risankizumab, are likely to be game-changers in the RA and PsO indications.

Devlia notes: "AbbVie seems relatively unfazed by the impact of Humira biosimilars on overall sales and has demonstrated that its pipeline for immunology indications remains strong. In head-to-head trials, risankizumab has shown stronger efficacy than conventional treatments and key opinion leaders (KOLs) interviewed by GlobalData all anticipate it will outperform in the commercial setting due to these strong Phase III clinical trial results."

With this clinical superiority in mind, GlobalData forecasts that risankizumab will generate sales of $899.5m by 2027 in the PsO market. This nearly matches projected losses in Humira sales due to biosimilar erosion in this indication–$905.5m. The forthcoming approval and launch of risankizumab will likely allow AbbVie to remain a powerful contender in the fiercely competitive PsO market.

While KOLs displayed a similar enthusiasm for upadacitinib in the treatment of RA, the unique dynamics of the RA market may make it more difficult for upadacitinib to completely erase the losses experienced by Humira.

Based on forecasts by GlobalData , after its launch in the RA indication, upadacitinib is expected to reach annual sales of $879.7m in the 7MM by 2027. At the same time, Humira is set to lose $2.50bn in sales, meaning that upadacitinib sales will recoup less than 40% of revenues lost to biosimilar erosion.

Joachim explains: “The crowded market dynamics in RA as well as an abundance of equivalently effective drugs will make it difficult for upadacitinib to take Humira’s place. However, AbbVie’s earlier stage pipeline for RA is among the richest, containing agents targeting a variety of new mechanisms of action.”

*7MM: The US, France, Germany, Italy, Spain, the UK and Japan