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Abbott Lingo Leaders On Consumer Biowearable Outlook: 'A Lot Of Appetite For Glucose As A Biomarker For Your Health'

by [Marion Webb](#)

Exec Chat: UK consumer feedback has led to enhancements to the Lingo biowearable's companion app to provide deeper, more personalized insight on the meaning of glucose spikes, as well as weeklong challenges to encourage healthy behavioral changes. While awaiting FDA clearance for a planned 2024 launch of Lingo stateside, Abbott also is exploring ways of accessorizing the Lingo sensor to make it more fashionable. Lingo Biowearables leaders Olivier Ropars and Ben Fohner discuss.

[Abbott](#) leaders are divided between two events in January of importance to the company's diabetes care business, the J.P. Morgan Healthcare Conference in San Francisco and the Consumer Electronics Show (CES) in Las Vegas.

While CEO Robert Ford was laying out his vision for the market-leading FreeStyle Libre continuous glucose monitor (CGM) to investors at J.P. Morgan, the spotlight at CES was on Abbott's consumer Lingo biowearable, which began rolling out to UK consumers in 2023.

Abbott affirmed at CES that the UK's positive reception and user feedback have led to enhancements to the product's app ahead of a planned US launch.

Lingo, which is based on Abbott's FreeStyle Libre diabetes monitoring platform, works with a companion app to help identify habits that have a negative impact on users' health and guide them in modifying their behavior accordingly. At

Abbott's Metabolic Biowearable Gets 'Extremely Positive' UK Reception; Next Up, US Filing

the core of Lingo is the ‘Lingo Count.’ A biosensor tracks glucose levels in real time and assigns each glucose spike a value; the more glucose spikes a person has, the more Lingo counts they accrue. The data can provide key insights about their metabolism.

Medtech Insight sat down at CES with Olivier Ropars (first photo below), division vice president of Abbott’s Lingo Biowearables, and Ben Fohner (second photo below), director of product for Abbott’s Lingo business and head of the Lingo app team, to discuss recent developments as well as Abbott’s plan for the US market as it awaits Lingo’s clearance by the US Food and Drug Administration.

By [Marion Webb](#)

18 Oct 2023

Medtech Insight caught up with Abbott’s division VP of Lingo Biowearables at HLTH to learn more about its recent UK launch and future plans.

[Read the full article here](#)



Abbott

The interview has been lightly edited for content and length.



Medtech Insight: Lingo has been on the UK market for about six months now. How

has it been received by consumers?

A Ropars: There is a lot of interest for this kind of biowearable and having the ability to understand what's going on inside your body and being able to connect it to your behaviors. There's a lot of appetite for glucose as a biomarker for your health. There's a lot of research that has shown our metabolic health is connected to overall health, and our glucose is the most important biomarker for metabolic health. If you manage

your glucose appropriately, you will improve your metabolic health, which will then lead to better health, and people are now more and more aware of the fact that their lifestyle is the main driver of their health.

There is a statistic that really shocked me when I read it for the first time – 80% of chronic diseases and premature death could be prevented by adhering to healthy behaviors, not your DNA. We've seen a lot of people already changing their behaviors based on their glucose levels.

Q What are the biggest changes you have seen thus far with people using Lingo?

A Ropars: It varies widely. Some people change their evening routine and have dinner earlier and do not go to the kitchen anymore for snacks, because they see how much it impacts sleep. We've seen instances where people are exercising a lot more or just going out more walking, taking walks after their meals, because it's part of the Five Lingo Fundamentals [prioritize protein, don't fear fat, go with green, savory not sweet, move more] that we teach people for how to change behaviors based on what they see in their glucose graph. And walking after a meal is a great way to lower your glycemic exposure. We see people changing their breakfast routine. Any part of the day you see a lot of changes happening and they're all different depending on the people who are unique themselves and have different needs.

Q What type of feedback have you received from Lingo users that helped you enhance the app?

A Ropars: We realized a lot of people have a little knowledge around metabolism, but understanding of glucose variability is still very nascent. One of the questions we get is, 'Why am I spiking here?' Or, 'Is that a normal level of glucose for me?' In the first app, we put a lot of faith in coaching, a lot of content and tips on how to change your lifestyle, which is still very important. But people want to understand why their glucose is spiking and what it means for them. We added a lot more insight and information to understand your personal metabolism on top of tips and recommendations to change your behavior accordingly.

Ben Fohner: It was a real privilege to be able to learn from users and get the early users' feedback and really have a lot of in-depth conversations with people over the course of several months. They want to see how things trend over time, they want to be able to break down their different Lingo Counts, the algorithm that identifies glucose spikes and assigns them to Lingo Count daily targets. That's really where we've invested a lot, being able to give people that more in-depth knowledge and context that they were looking for, both in being able to understand your spikes in your glucose levels in a lot more detail, but also having a lot richer resources in terms of content that are available for people. We have a Discover tab, which is a library of incredible research and knowledge that exists around metabolic health.

What we're doing is surfacing that content in the right way, at the right time for people so it's personally relevant to them. You can imagine having a library of all these resources, but the magic is being able to recommend the right book at the right time. Another big change that we've made in the product is introducing this idea of challenges, which lets people pick a new healthy habit that they want to build and work on over the course of a week and see how they do against it, but also see the impact of that habit and how their glucose becomes more stable over time. We learned through those user interviews that people are looking for actions they can take: 'I can see my glucose, I can understand it, but what can I do about it? How do I make that more stable?' These challenges are a way for people to start making progress in that direction to be more stable.

Q Can you explain a bit more about how these challenges work?

A Fohner: They're bite-sized, so people can start them for a week. The idea is to build those habits for a week and then maintain them over time. But they're also recommended to people based on what we know about their glucose levels. So if somebody tends to accrue more Lingo Counts in the morning, then we can recommend challenges that are specific to the morning and help them have better control over their glucose values during that period of time. There's an element of recommendation and tailoring those challenges for people to take on based on their

own personal metabolic patterns that they can see in the app.

Q How many Lingo challenges are there? Can you give an example?

A Fohner: We have enough for people to have variety and to pick different challenges, but they will continue to be added over time. Right now, the challenges are a week long, but eventually they can be smaller or longer challenges. It's really about having the flexibility to meet people where they are and take on new habits that fit into their day-to-day lives. The challenge I'm working on this week is the 'Get Moving' challenge. This challenge was recommended to me because I needed to control my spikes during meal times. If you move after a meal, your spikes come down much more quickly. I've been doing this for the last two days. This is my spike from this morning [showing the app]. I had coffee with milk, eggs, fruit salad – and the toast with jam is what killed me. That's when I started spiking. A bit later I just went to the gym and ran 15 minutes on a treadmill, which helped bring the spike down really quickly. That's one example, but there's a range of other challenges that are geared towards different behaviors.

Q How about wearing the sensor. Is comfort an issue for users?

A Ropars: Wearing the sensor is not an issue for people. If there is any feedback, some people find it isn't the most fashionable thing to wear on your arm. We are working on different ways of accessorizing it, which I think is super exciting. Sometimes it comes with the stigma, 'Are you sick?' 'Do you have diabetes?' We are changing that positioning to be a signal of taking control of your health.

Q How might Lingo be accessorized?

A Ropars: I won't go into details of accessorizing. It's like anything you wear on your body, it has to be beautiful. We're following the same approach: How can we beautify it? How can we express your personality and so forth?

Q What is the cost of the product?

A Ropars: It's £300 (\$381) for two months. That includes access to the personalized insights and customized coaching through the app and four sensors. If you want to extend the product, we have a subscription mechanism where you can pay £120 a month to get another two sensors every month. We have seen a lot of engagement beyond the two months [Abbott does not disclose number of users]. We also introduced a new program in the UK, the Discovery Pack for £89, which includes access to personalized insights and customized coaching through the app and one sensor.

Q Lingo is currently being reviewed by the US Food and Drug Administration for clearance in the US. Do you have an update?

A Ropars: We submitted our application in 2023 before the end of the year, and we are engaging with them [FDA] and working through the process. Our expectation is to bring the product to the US market in 2024.

Q Since you made changes to the app for UK customers, what does that mean for the application you submitted for US FDA review in December?

A Ropars: We are walking through that with the FDA. I can't give you much more detail on that. It's a complex question, ultimately.

Q What is your marketing strategy for US rollout of Lingo and your plans for introducing Lingo elsewhere?

A Ropars: I can't really talk about our strategy for the rollout. We want to expand as fast as possible. I want to have a great launch in the UK and the US, and then I'm sure we're going to continually iterate and learn and improve the product as we go and then expand in more markets based on our ability to do so.