

Levers for Launch: How Five Analog Brands Used Positioning, Advocacy, Evidence, and Access Levers for Launch and Beyond

CASE STUDY - VOL. 2 OF 5: **NUPLAZID**



OVERVIEW

This whitepaper is the second volume of a five-part series that distills the essence of what to do when launching a pharmaceutical product. We curated five analog products and analyzed how they deployed four launch levers: **Positioning Strategy, Advocacy and Guideline Inclusion, Evidence Generation, and Market Access**, to create traction and sustain growth. Each case is mapped to a launch archetype: **Paradigm Shaper, First Mover, Late Challenger, Opportunist** to clarify context and actions taken.

Who should read this: Commercial, medical, market access, and analytics leaders who are preparing to launch a brand or have recently launched one.

How to use this series: Identify your product archetype → review lever playbooks from the most relevant analogs → adapt actions for your product as appropriate.

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INTRODUCTION

As referenced in the extended introduction provided in volume 1 of this case study series, this white paper series explores five examples of novel brands that shaped or reshaped their commercial trajectory through deliberate activation of key levers. Using a consistent framework, we examine each analog case through four strategic levers: Positioning Strategy, Advocacy & Guideline Inclusion, Evidence Generation, and Market Access.

Case Study 1 of 5 examined Entresto—a case where initial hesitation gave way to broad adoption after HCPs were convinced on the “therapy switch moment” for patients, payer friction was resolved, and guideline language updates were incorporated.

FIGURE 1.

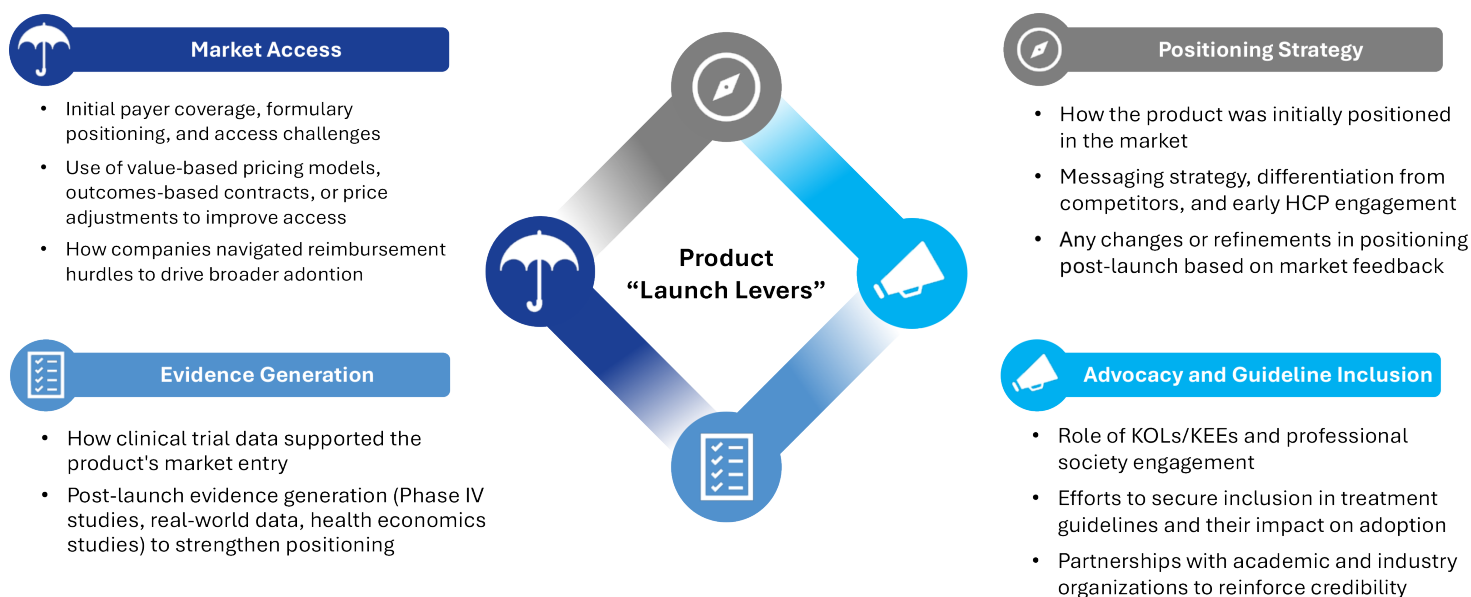


Figure 1. Overview of product “Launch Lever” categories in preparation for, at launch, and following launch.

FIGURE 2.

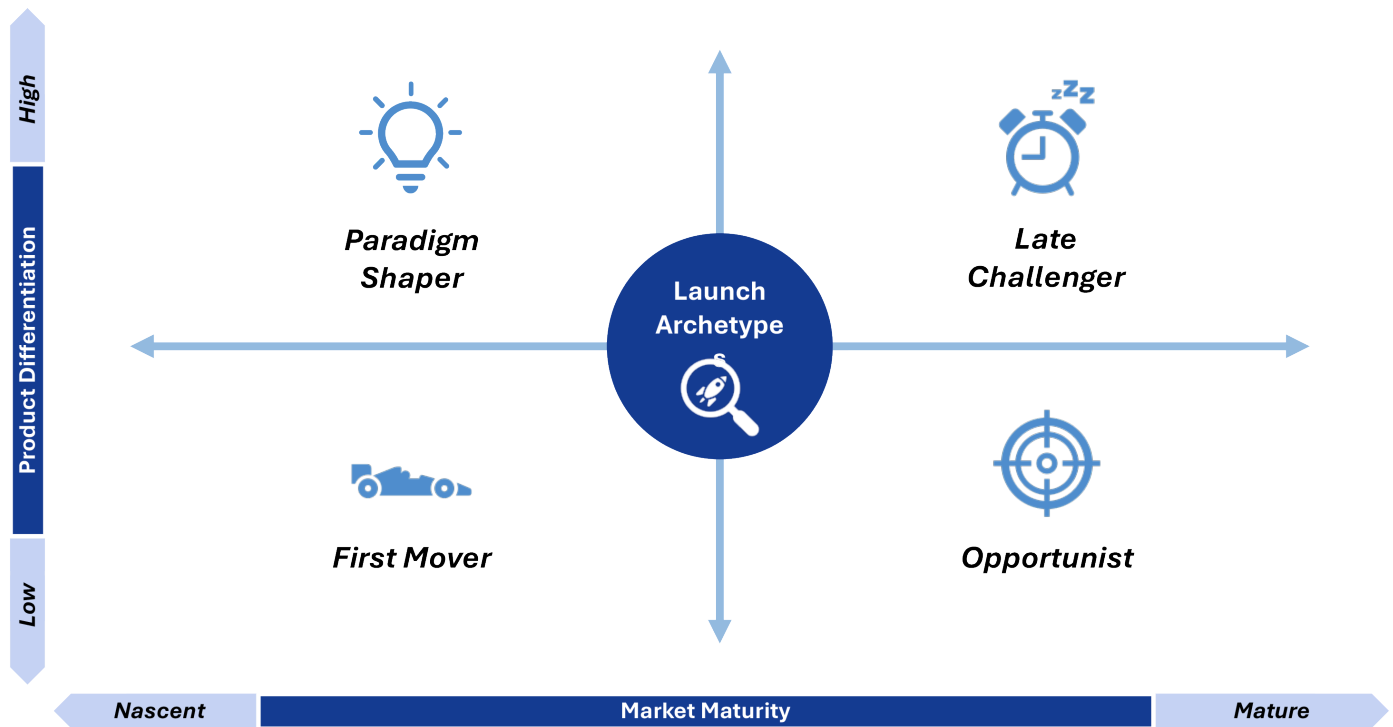


Figure 2. Illustrates four launch archetypes defined by the intersection of product differentiation and market maturity, highlighting the strategic contexts in which potential launch strategies may emerge

Note: Market maturity is defined by the degree of branded and generic competition within an indication

We selected brands that (1) faced meaningful early adoption barriers, (2) executed targeted beachhead strategies, and (3) left a visible trail of levers used (positioning, advocacy/guidelines, evidence, access) that launch teams can adapt. The set spans cardiovascular, oncology, CNS, and rare disease to ensure breadth across therapeutic areas

FIGURE 3.






Product	Disease Area	Mechanism of Action	Launch Archetype	Product Launch Overview
 Entresto™ sacubitril/valsartan	HFrEF/HFpEF	ARNI	<i>Paradigm Shaper</i>	Entresto is a product in the cardiovascular space with a dual ARNI mechanism, representing a strong acceleration of market access and clinical uptake driven by extensive evidence generation, real-world validation, and targeted market-shaping initiatives
 NUPLAZID™ (pimavanserin) tablets	PD Psychosis	Selective 5-HT _{2A} inverse agonist	<i>First Mover</i>	Nuplazid is a therapy in the Parkinson's disease psychosis space with a selective 5-HT _{2A} inverse agonist mechanism, representing a differentiated CNS launch that overcame early resistance through focused clinical education and advocacy-driven market engagement
 Repatha™ (evolocumab)	LDL-C	PCSK9 inhibitor mAb	<i>Late Challenger</i>	Repatha is a therapy in the cardiovascular space with a PCSK9-inhibiting mechanism, representing a clinically differentiated but access-sensitive launch that was repositioned successfully through outcomes validation and strategic pricing realignment
 Vyndamax™ (tafamidis) orally dissolving tablets	ATTR-CM	TTR Stabilizer	<i>Paradigm Shaper</i>	Vyndaquel/Vyndamax is a therapy in the rare disease cardiovascular space with a transthyretin-stabilizing mechanism, representing a market-shaping breakthrough that turned a once-invisible disease into a defined, treatable condition through focused clinical education and advocacy-driven market engagement
 Kadcyla	HER2+ breast cancer	HER2+ ADC	<i>Late Challenger</i>	Kadcyla is a therapy in the breast cancer space with a HER2+ antibody-drug conjugate mechanism, representing a case of functional innovation that required post-launch evidence and strategic repositioning to unlock its full commercial potential

Figure 3. Provides an overview of the five analog products analyzed in this series, highlighting their therapeutic area, mechanism of action, launch archetype, and a brief launch overview

Note: The five analog products featured in the table above are categorized using launch archetypes, which help frame each asset's initial market context.

CASE STUDY 2: NUPLAZID

FIGURE 4.

NUPLAZID®
 (pimavanserin) 34mg capsules

Product Overview

- Nuplazid (pimavanserin), launched by Acadia in 2016 as the first and only FDA-approved therapy for Parkinson's disease psychosis (PDP)

– It was positioned as a breakthrough for addressing hallucinations and delusions in Parkinson's patients without worsening motor symptoms, aiming to displace widespread off-label use of atypical antipsychotic

- Despite strong clinical need, Nuplazid's early adoption was tempered by safety scrutiny, physician inertia, and payer restrictions

– Through transparent communication, intensive advocacy, targeted evidence generation, and robust patient access programs, Acadia stabilized Nuplazid's trajectory and established it as the standard of care in PDP

Market Phases: Nuplazid's performance in the market from launch in 2016 to present can be segmented into four phases:

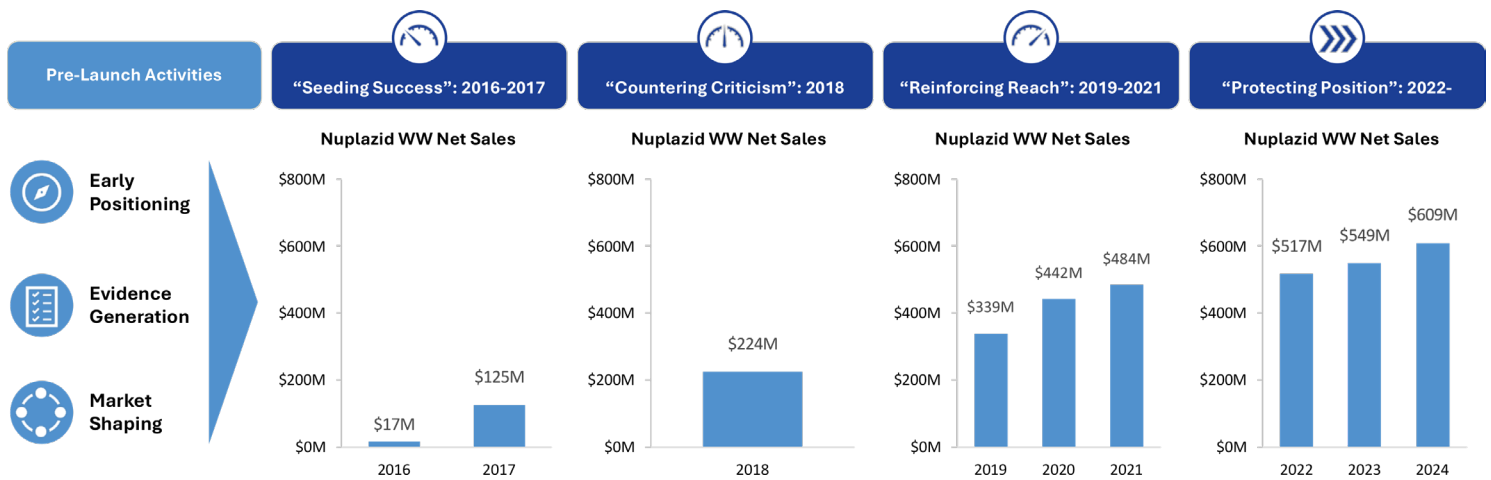
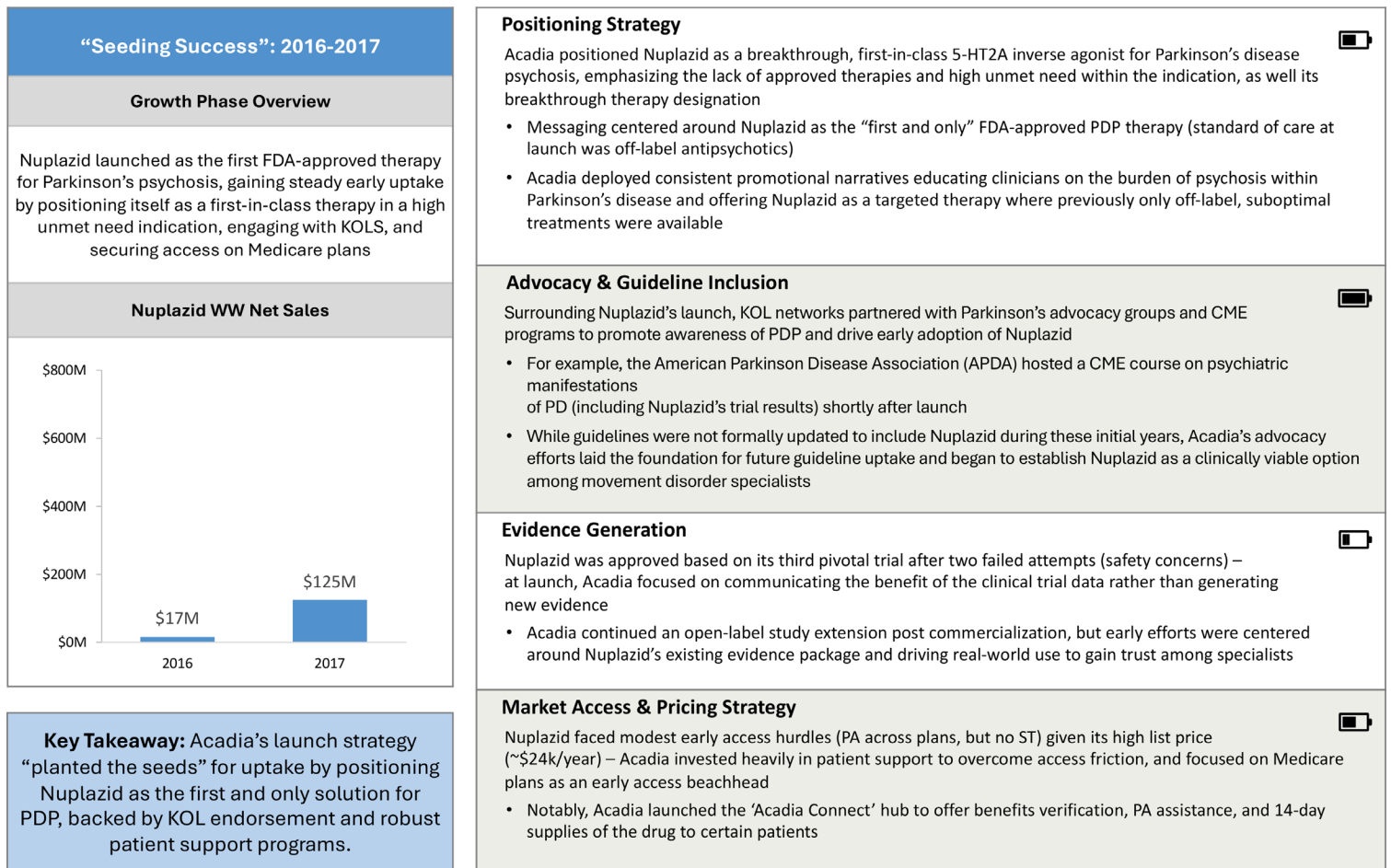


Figure 4. Overview of Nuplazid's commercial performance, segmented by revenue growth phases

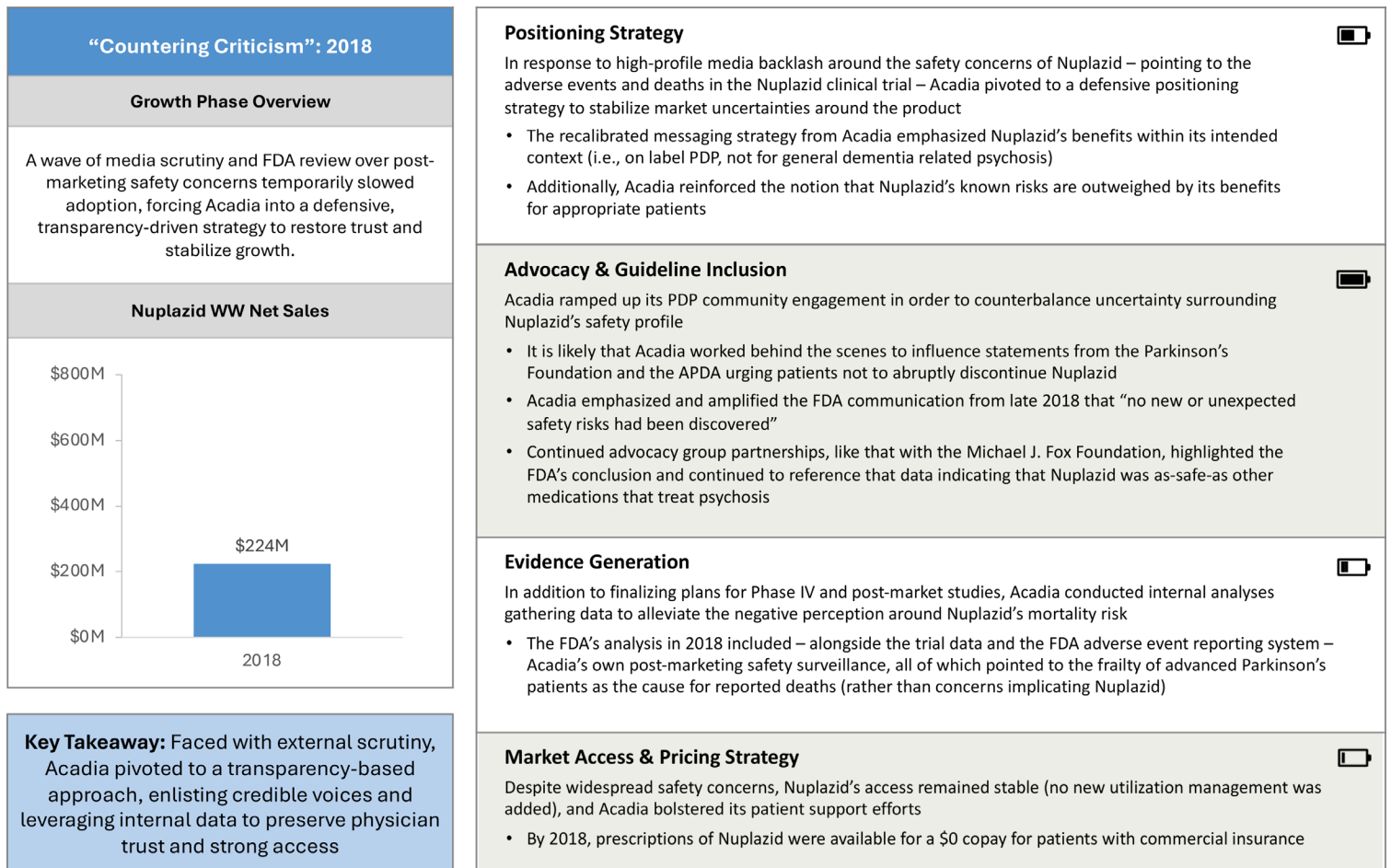
FIGURE 5.



Perceived Effort Level:  High  High-mod  Mod-low  Low

Figure 5. Overview of Nuplazid’s commercial performance “Seeding Success” phase

FIGURE 6.



Perceived Effort Level:  High  High-mod  Mod-low  Low

Figure 6. Overview of Nuplazid’s commercial performance “Countering Criticism” phase

FIGURE 7.

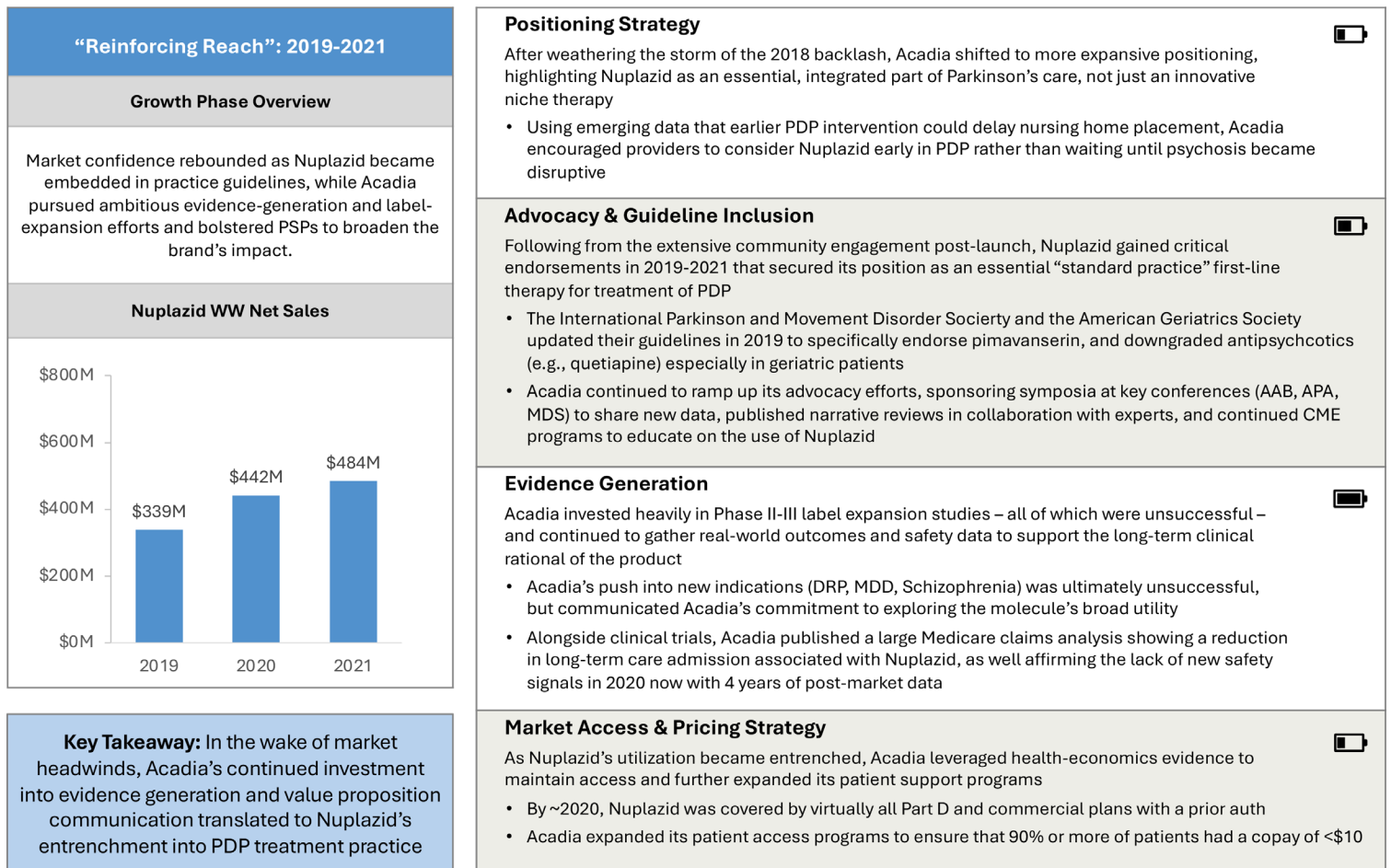
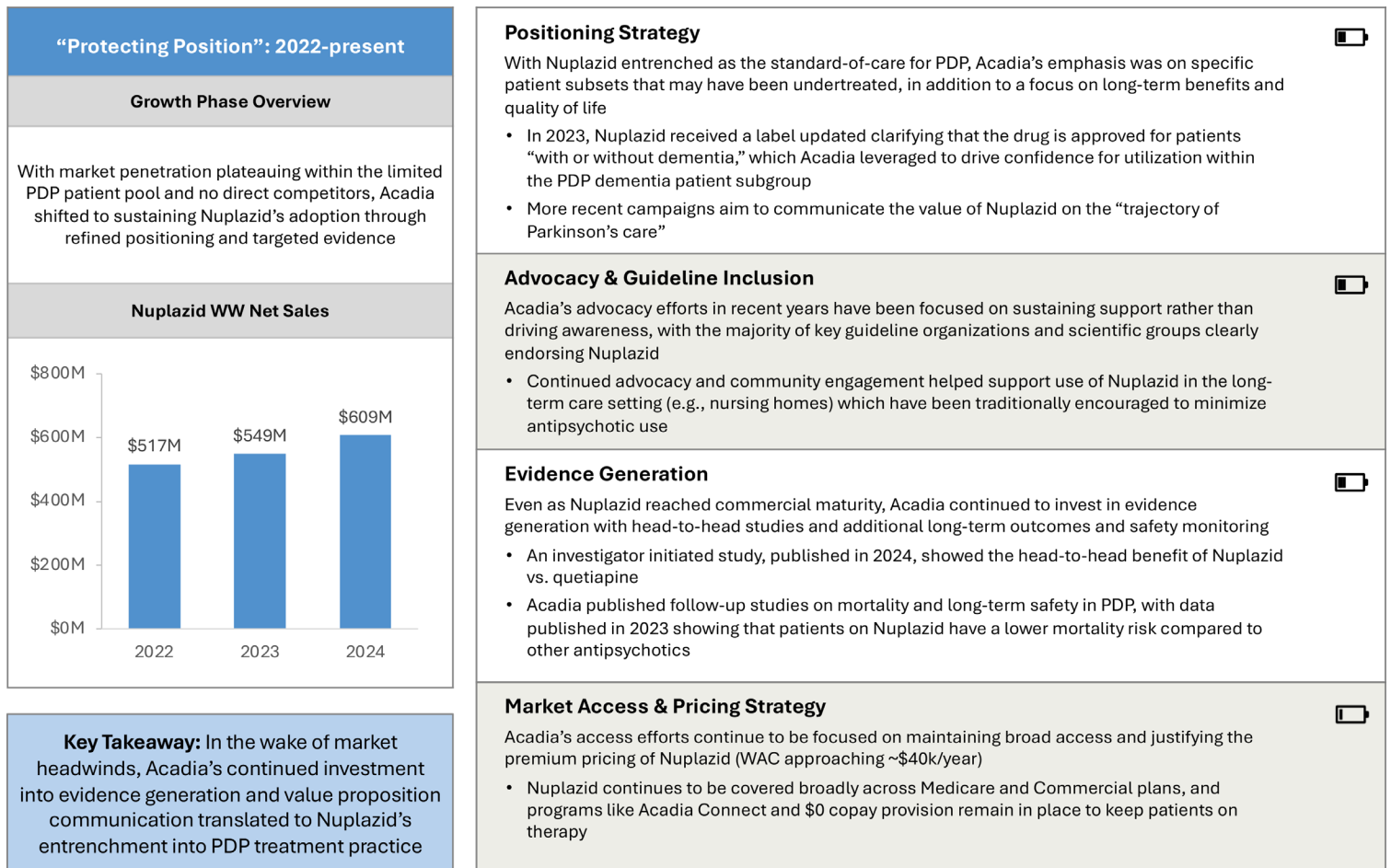


Figure 7. Overview of Nuplazid’s commercial performance “Reinforcing Reach” phase

FIGURE 8.



Perceived Effort Level:  High  High-mod  Mod-low  Low

Figure 8. Overview of Nuplazid’s commercial performance “Protecting Position” phase

CLOSING

What to consider for your product based on learnings from Nuplazid:

1. Create Conversation Early on the Need to Treat

Define the exact patient profile that exhibits clear unmet need and a need to treat from the start. This helps overcome entrenched off-label habits and accelerates adoption of a new standard.

2. Enlist Champions and Build Credibility

Activate trusted KOLs and advocacy groups to validate the benefit–risk and carry the message during moments of skepticism. Independent voices stabilize confidence more effectively than company-led promotion.

3. Data is Your Defense (and Offense)

Continually generate and share evidence — from RWE to head-to-head comparisons — to defend against scrutiny and reinforce value. Transparent data use transforms potential threats into opportunities for differentiation and credibility.

4. Access is as Critical as Efficacy

Premium-priced therapies must be paired with intensive payer engagement and robust patient support to remove financial friction. If cost blocks treatment, clinical innovation alone will not secure uptake.

5. Adapt and Evolve the Launch

Each phase of a product's lifecycle demands recalibration of levers — from safety-focused messaging to refined positioning in new subgroups. Treat launch as a multi-year process that requires flexibility to sustain momentum.

SERIES SEGUE

This wraps Case Study 2 of 5 (Nuplazid) — a launch where early advocacy and dynamic positioning drove clinical entrenchment and commercial success despite community hesitations on safety profile.

Case Study 3 will examine Repatha, a product scenario which began as an access-constrained launch but was repositioned through outcomes validation and strategic pricing adjustments to unlock broader adoption.
