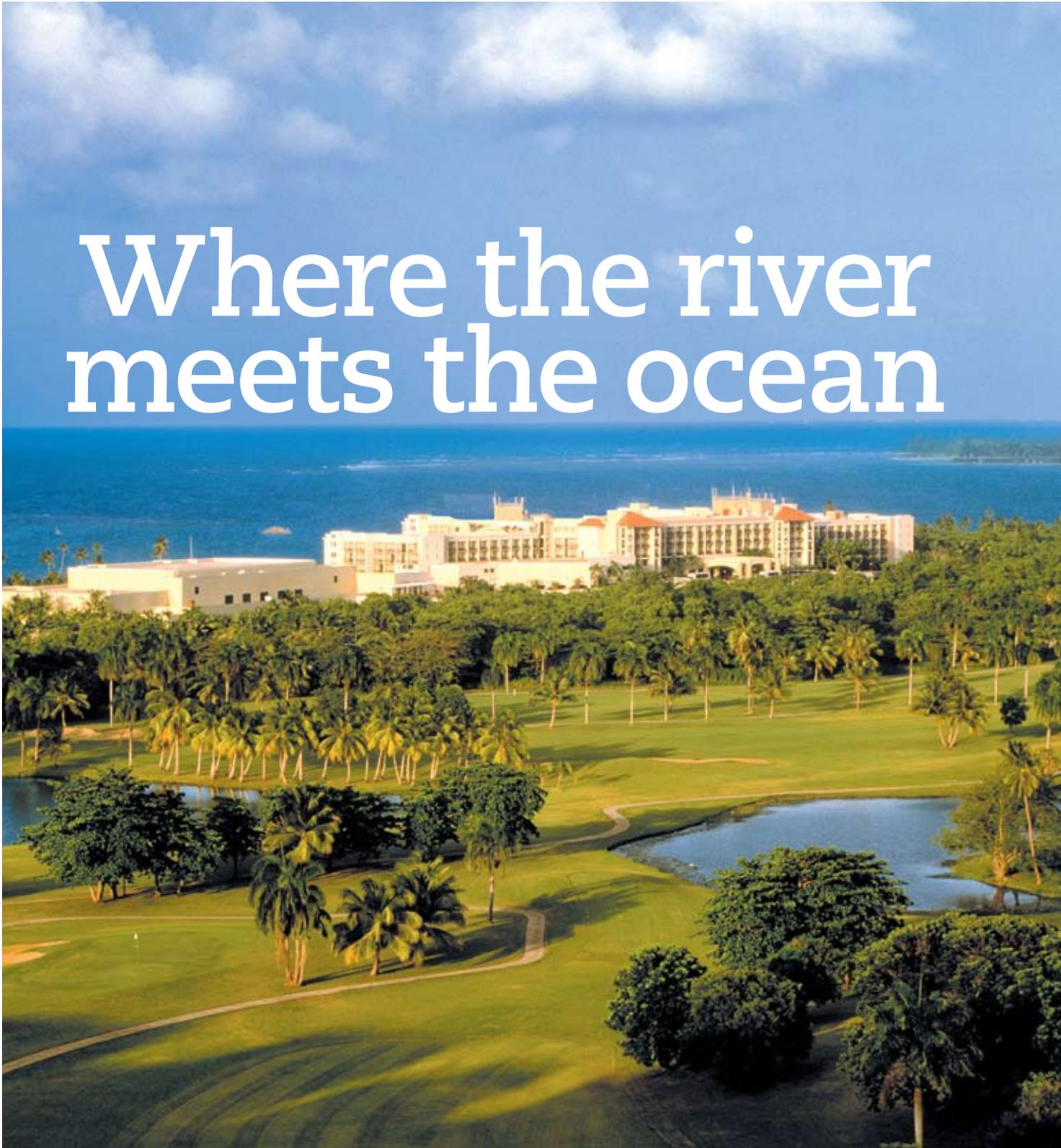




PODCAST

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Where the river meets the ocean





JEREMY MARQUARD,

Director of Sales and Marketing at Rio Mar Beach Resort, Puerto Rico, talks to *Future Pharmaceuticals* about why the resort is the venue of choice for the pharmaceutical market

Future Pharmaceutical In this tough economy, what value does Rio Mar provide for potential groups?

Jeremy Marquard One of the best things about taking a meeting, not only to Rio Mar, but to Puerto Rico, is its exotic location in the middle of the Caribbean. The location also has all the conveniences of the U.S., as Puerto Rico is a U.S. territory. It is also the hub of the Caribbean in terms of air access — even with the recent cutbacks across the board from a national level — we still see and enjoy one of the best air access points.

You won't see a price jump getting into Puerto Rico as you might expect from other major destinations. In addition, you'll find that the hotel rates tend to be much more competitive than some of the major resort markets within the U.S. For example, places like South Florida or the 'Valley of the Sun' in Phoenix or Southern California, tend to be very popular spots for meetings and our rates are consistent, and sometimes lower, than these destinations. In fact, we tend to be between \$30 and \$50 below peak season rates of some of the four-star and four-diamond properties that we compete against. So there is tremendous value in terms of taking your business, not only off-shore to Puerto Rico, but to the Rio Mar.

FP When looking at "destination meetings," why should companies choose Puerto Rico?

JM Puerto Rico has passed laws in the last two decades that really encourage the development of pharmaceutical manufacturing on the island. So there has already been an ongoing relationship with pharmaceutical companies and Puerto Rico as a destination.

Passports are not required for entry into Puerto Rico, which alleviates concerns and logistical hassles for meeting planners. The Puerto Rican Convention Bureau is also very friendly and assists companies in terms of financial concessions and logistics — ensuring all attendees have ease of arrival to the island. As it is a U.S. territory, shipping your conference materials to and from the island is extremely convenient.

FP Why should companies choose the Rio Mar Beach Resort over others in Puerto Rico?

JM The Rio Mar is the most comprehensive resort within the Puerto Rican market. Competition is fierce as you head to San Juan or out towards the outlying areas, but you will not find another resort that has everything under one roof as we do.

Rio Mar has 48,000 square feet of meeting space and a 21,000 square foot ballroom, which are very flexible spaces. »

WHERE THE RIVER MEETS THE OCEAN



When you are planning a meeting space, breakout spaces become critical to flush out your meeting and accomplish objectives from a business standpoint.

In terms of the layout of the resort, it is adjacent to the ocean so you have perfect access to the beach. There is an adult and children's pool and two large golf courses — one is the river course, and one is the ocean course. It's a beautiful setting where the river and ocean meet, hence the name *Rio Mar*. There is also a spa, which has been recently renovated and suitable to the needs of any attendee who wants to take time to relax.

The service at the *Rio Mar* is head and shoulders above our competition on the island — our employees are treated like a family. Some of our employees have been around since the hotel opened in 1996, and with the training that Wyndham has put into the staff, we've seen employee satisfaction skyrocket, and this has certainly been reflected in customer satisfaction as well.

We not only enjoy new business, but we also have a lot of repeat business because of the experience that we create. From a meeting planner's standpoint, partnering with the hotel team is important so that they understand the needs and wants of the group and I think that is something the *Rio Mar* consistently delivers every single time with our groups. They are always completely satisfied. Coupled with the luxurious surroundings, we take service to the next level.

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FP What are the changes that have gone on at the resort since Wyndham took over the flag?

JM Wyndham took over and made large investments into the property. It has a new bedding package, flat screen TVs have been installed in every room and a new key system has also been put into place. The casino, which is adjacent to the lobby, also had a \$4 million injection. The company has invested heavily into the management portion of the property to ensure that all associates are fully trained in the 'Wyndham-way' to retain our customer satisfaction levels.

Wyndham is essentially a new company and was re-invented in 2005 after many transactions over the last decade or so. It has primarily been known as a franchise company, but it is now getting into the management aspect of the hotel industry and the *Rio Mar* has become the crown jewel in the Wyndham collection so far.

The plan is to elevate the quality of the product, and of all the hotel companies out there Wyndham is one of the few that has the capital to continue to invest in, not only the properties that they have, but in new properties to continue to increase and strengthen its portfolio across the board.

FP What is the direction that Wyndham will take into the future and how does it relate to the *Rio Mar*?

JM As the prime property in the Wyndham collection we will continue to see heavy investment. We do have some capital projects on the docket for 2009 and that will involve some renovation. Wyndham is conscious of the fact that we are a cornerstone property to ensure that the meeting planner and guest attendee experience is second to none. **FP**



JEREMY MARQUARD Since Mr. Marquard began his hospitality career, he has held a number of professional positions in the industry. Previously, he served as Director of Group Sales for the Westin Diplomat Resort and Spa and the Diplomat Golf Resort in Florida where he was responsible for managing a sales and marketing staff of more than 60. Prior to the Diplomat, Marquard was the Director of Group Sales at the Westin and Sheraton Grand Bahama Island at Our Lucya.

REDEFINE THE CONCEPT OF 'MEETINGS'



*NO DICTIONARY REQUIRED



Whether it's an intimate board meeting, or an extraordinary location for your next national meeting, Rio Mar Beach Resort, A Wyndham Grand Resort, is the perfect Caribbean venue.

- 48,000 square foot Oceanfront conference center
- 12,000 square feet of additional indoor and outdoor meeting space
- 600 elegantly appointed guest rooms with private balconies
- Outdoor venues with poolside patios and tropical gardens
- 24 meeting rooms
- Eleven restaurants & lounges
- Two championship golf courses, Mandara Spa & new Rio Mar Casino
- Endless beachside recreation, water sports & more!



RIO MAR BEACH RESORT
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