Mohamed Swilam – General Manager, Roche Egypt



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Roche Pharma General Manager in Egypt Mohamed Swilam shares his experience implementing a new operational model that is "challenging the status quo" of the pharma industry. He also explains the changing dynamics of the Egyptian pharma market – the fastest growing in the Middle East and Africa region – and talks about his new role as chairman of the association of the multinational innovative pharmaceutical companies in the country.

We would like to start with the transformation of healthcare in Egypt. Can you comment on the broader trends in the market today?

As General Manager of Roche Egypt, I recognize that healthcare is complex, and no one can solve it alone.

At Roche, we are proud of being one of the strategic partners in an evolving healthcare system, working with stakeholders to co-create solutions that improve outcomes – outcomes that matter to patients across the full care cycle. By joining forces with cross-sector and healthcare partners, we can achieve the speed, scale, and efficiency to accelerate patient access to innovation and deliver high-quality care targeted to each and every individual's unique needs.

Today, we are witnessing a huge effort by the government to deliver this innovation. A change in dynamism, appreciation and understanding of the value of innovation – and of agility.

In my humble opinion, we are now living in the best time of healthcare provision in Egypt in terms of positive change, appreciation of the value of innovation and genuine interest from decision makers to improve patients' lives. And I believe so much more to come.

Roche itself has been transforming in recent years, introducing a new operational model, and is about to see a change at the CEO level. What should our readers know about the Roche experiment?

Roche has a long history of more than 125 years of researching, developing, and delivering breakthrough diagnostics and medicines that have made a meaningful difference to the lives of millions of people worldwide.

Today, patients and society need us to do more – to achieve better outcomes for more patients faster. We are answering that call and evolving our organisation to better meet the needs of patients today and tomorrow. We are evolving our organisation so we can do what patients and society need us to do.

This means delivering more medical advances to patients while reducing the cost to society, and maximising the use of our diagnostic, pharmaceutical, and data expertise to enable health systems that improve outcomes for patients in a way that is sustainable in the long term.

This is our commitment to make a meaningful difference to the future of healthcare for the benefit of the patients of today and tomorrow.

As general manager for Roche Egypt, I see a parallel between what is happening in the country and the company: **transformation**. Although it can be exhausting, I love what we as a company are doing – we're doing things that have not been done in the industry for many years. Roche is challenging the status quo – the core of the traditional commercial model – which has long been focused on the product.

Roche is challenging this model by revolving our operational model around improving the patient journey and supporting the sustainability of the healthcare system. We believe when we do this right, the business will follow.

Why are we doing that? Because we believe the healthcare system and society needs are changing drastically. What made us successful in the past needs to change to remain leaders of the future. We are very proud of the contribution we make to patients and society and when we look at our

rich pipeline and great people we feel we must be faster and think differently about how to bring value.

That is our brand: **“doing now what patients need next.”**

To do that, we must anticipate the future, which is full of hope amidst this great innovation coming from companies’ pipelines. Science is moving very fast as evidenced by the new generation of cancer treatments and the arrival of personalised medicine.

Business agility is trending now across many industries, not just in pharma. Roche is taking a pioneering step into introducing business agility into its internal way of working – learning how to be a fast, giant, lean organisation that co-creates value with customers. This new model has transformed the way we do everything, from human resources, to supply chain and finance.

Has the “no sales targets” model worked so far? Do you set targets for your team?

I do not set sales targets for my team anymore. That is something I like about what we are doing at Roche; we are challenging a status quo that has dominated for many decades. It is very provocative, of course – which I like.

As someone who spent seven years as a sales rep, I understand that there are pros and cons with sales targets – as they come with end-of-the-year bonuses. The idea behind the new approach is that if people are driven by something bigger than bonuses, they can drive bigger results. It was not easy in the beginning, but the results after four years are very encouraging.

Then what would you say is the motivation for your teams if there is no financial incentive?

What we are focusing on is the stronger intrinsic motivator for people, and their commitment to impact patients’ lives, more than focusing on the extrinsic motivator – the bonus. Of course, we all need to be fairly rewarded, and the model still addresses that, while the key driver we aim to boost is the intrinsic one.

Our hypothesis is when the sales target is removed in the presence of a strong intrinsic motivator, the organisation can do better. We live a good example of that in Roche Egypt as we are leading the market growth for the last four years among multinationals amidst our transformation journey,

including the piece related to removing sales targets.

Another gain we realised during the transformation was the creation of function-agnostic roles like Patient Journey Partners and Healthcare System Partners, as these roles are complex and require a wider range of skills and capabilities, offering greater opportunities for growth. This fact is a strong motivator for many people in the organisation

We certainly look at the numbers – but as a lagging indicator, not a leading one. That is the fundamental difference.

Roche has also committed to bringing innovation at an affordable price to low- and middle-income countries. How are you implementing this in Egypt?

Life-changing innovation in medicine is only meaningful if it reaches those who need it. We believe that everyone who needs our medicines should be able to access and benefit from them. Improving access is at the heart of our ambition of bringing 3 to 5 times more medical advances at a lower cost to society.

This ambition does not only imply reducing the price, as there is a flexible pricing strategy that varies depending on the GDP per capita of each country.

As one of the world's largest biotech companies, we invest heavily in research and development to find ways to reduce the cost of illness overall to ensure a sustainable healthcare system.

We develop tailored access solutions that support healthcare systems, improve diagnosis, educate and build local skills, and address affordability issues to ensure as many patients as possible have access to our innovation.

We take a systematic and comprehensive approach to access because we believe there is no 'one size fits all' solution. Access is a multidimensional challenge. Diseases like cancer can require sophisticated diagnosis, specialised training and infrastructure for successful treatment. At a country level, we have a deep understanding of individual healthcare systems, and we partner with the right stakeholders to develop tailored solutions that make a sustainable difference in people's lives.

For example, ten years ago we partnered with the Egyptian Ministry of Health to improve cancer care in the public sector by improving the diagnosis quality and the treatment protocols. Imagine that ten years ago, in Egypt, targeted therapy became the standard of care! That's in addition to

raising the quality and quantity of pathology testing to the global standard – that's something we're really proud of.

One Of the key highlights of our contribution in Egypt is in the breast cancer presidential initiative, the quality of care that breast cancer women in Egypt receive today and the outcomes achieved is a big success story! More than 15 million women have been screened in a record time and those that have been detected did receive the best available diagnosis and treatment options available at the global level. I am proud as an Egyptian and I am also proud that Roche Egypt has a stake in this success story.

We continue to work closely with the Government of Egypt on similar initiatives. In the past we supported the journey to eliminate Hepatitis C in Egypt, and now we are supporting the government in the management of difficult-to-treat diseases like multiple sclerosis, haemophilia, haematological diseases, the most prevalent types of cancer and most recently our youngest patients with spinal muscular atrophy.

We're focused on ensuring the government has the tools it needs to overcome financial hurdles that will unlock exponential growth in adopting these innovations in Egypt.

How else is the company collaborating with Egypt to build a better healthcare system? Are there any local initiatives you would like to highlight?

We're proud to work closely and collaboratively with the Government of Egypt to support the evolution of the healthcare system towards a value-based healthcare system that will ensure long-term sustainability.

We are doing so with all relevant authorities: the Ministry of Health, Universal Health Insurance Authority, Unified Procurement Authority, Egypt Drug Authority, and the Health Insurance Organisation. We're partnering in areas such as digital transformation, data generation, provider education, value-based evaluation, and procurement to support the development of integrated, sustainable, and patient-centric health systems that drive better outcomes for more patients, faster.

We're also working closely with the authorities on the development and roll-out of a Health Technology Assessment (HTA), which can be a valuable tool to ensure that the limited resources of the healthcare system are spent in an efficient way, delivering the best possible outcomes for both patients and the healthcare system.

Also, in line with the Government of Egypt’s privatisation program, we announced our partnership with Gypto Pharma, a local pharmaceutical manufacturer, to start the technology transfer of Roche innovations here in Egypt – helping more patients gain better access to treatments that offer life-changing outcomes.

We are also leading in conducting clinical research in Egypt. We share the same vision of the relevant authorities in Egypt that the country has great potential to conduct more trials. This is a work in progress and we are committed to advancing this program.

Finally, data management is another area where Roche Egypt is collaborating with the relevant authorities and partners to build capabilities to collect quality data and make electronic medical records a standard practice in Egypt.

Together with the government of Egypt, we’re building the foundation for a strong healthcare ecosystem that will help Egyptians lead better lives in this country.

Can you tell us more about your new role as the head of the PhRMA group in Egypt?

PhRMA is an organisation that brings together research-based innovators in the pharmaceutical field to broaden and speed up access to innovation across the world. In Egypt, it has been represented for many years through the Egyptian Society for Pharmaceutical Research (ESPR), and I have had the privilege to be involved for the last eight years in my capacity as General Manager of Roche Egypt. ESPR represents 21 innovative multinational pharmaceutical companies operating in Egypt, including more than 6,000 employees in Egypt focused on bringing innovation to more Egyptian patients faster, and contributing to the economic growth of the country.

As I mentioned before, today we’re seeing great transformation taking place in the healthcare ecosystem in Egypt at a very fast pace. That’s why we felt ESPR needed to transform, too, to contribute to this transformation more impactfully.

We started by looking in-house to determine who is willing to contribute to this voluntary yet critical work. This August, we elected a new board, for which I am proud to serve as the chairman. I’m particularly inspired by our new board, who share a tremendous amount of energy and ambition to make a greater impact on Egyptian patients, and to support the healthcare ecosystem to evolve to accommodate more of the innovation that is coming – which is very promising.

Whenever I sit with my colleagues in the pharmaceutical innovation field, I feel we speak exactly the same language. Now more than ever, we need to work together to create stronger, more resilient and responsive health systems. We are committed to working with all health system partners in the Egyptian healthcare ecosystem – including the Egyptian Drug Authority (EDA), the Unified Procurement Agency (UPA), the Ministry of Health (MoH) and the Universal Health Insurance Authority (UHIA) – to support their transformation and bring more innovation to the different points of patient care, from awareness to prevention, diagnosis, and treatment.

In this transformation, we're also focused on supporting the digitisation of the healthcare system. A data-enabled system will improve patients' outcomes, reduce the overall cost of illness, and accordingly, support the sustainability of the healthcare system in Egypt.

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