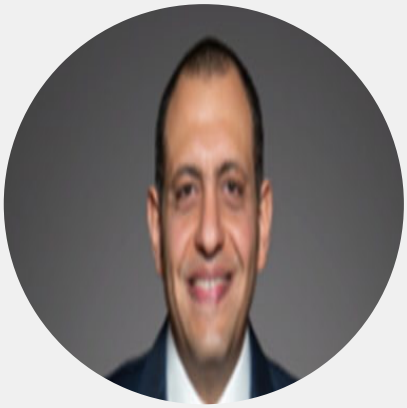
Hazem Abdel Samie – Managing Director Egypt, Libya, Sudan & Yemen, MSD



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MSD's managing director for Egypt, Libya, Sudan and Yemen, Hazem Abdel Samie, shares his perspective on recent changes within the American multinational and explains why Egypt's move from a predominantly out-of-pocket market to a public system will open up many new opportunities. He also offers his view on the possibility of health technology assessments (HTA) in the country and gives an overview of MSD's operations in Libya, Sudan and Yemen.

Hazem, can you begin by providing a brief snapshot of your career in the industry and MSD?

I started my journey with MSD in 2006 and was appointed as managing director for the Egypt Cluster in 2021. Besides the great culture that MSD embraces, our company is really committed to saving and improving lives through delivering innovative health solutions that advance the prevention and treatment of the most challenging health concerns.

Throughout the years, I am glad that I was part of building multiple successful teams and developed numerous talents currently serving in various leadership positions.

You took over the managing director position at an interesting point for the company because of the COVID-19 pandemic. What can you tell us about how those changes have impacted the organisation?

The only constant in life is change, right? I believe we do have a strong culture with an agile mindset represented in a very resilient team; those were the main elements that enabled us to cope with the pandemic.

The COVID-19 pandemic hit the whole world, beside the negative impact that extended to losing the lives of loved ones, there were some very positive takeaways as well. These included the new definition of the hybrid working model; even whilst everything is almost back to normal, this new model is still considered a successful one by many.

The Egyptian market, the largest in your cluster, is undergoing a huge transformation as it moves towards a universal health insurance system. What can you tell us about the changes?

Starting with the Egyptian Drug Authority (EDA), we all witness tangible progress in terms of process simplification and agility in all aspects related to the registration and approval of products.

Additionally, we acknowledge the Egyptian Authority for Unified Procurement (UPA)’s role in unifying product prices and better evaluating treatments. Appraisals of new treatments are now increasingly relying on health technology assessment (HTA) technologies and the value that treatments can bring to patients, unlike previously when price was the sole consideration in tenders.

The Universal Health Insurance Authority (UHIA) is the most ambitious body and a dream for all Egyptians. For the first time we are able to foresee a solid plan for all Egyptian citizens to receive universal healthcare (UHC) in the near future, in accordance with the country’s Vision 2030. The UHIA will ensure full coverage for all Egyptians to all treatments! This represents an astonishing effort to cover such a large population with quality service and eliminate the financial burden on all beneficiaries.

The country is transforming and, as a **leading** pharma company, we must understand where the transformation is leading and build internal capabilities to cope with it. Accordingly, we included a new function in our operating model with a strong focus on External Affairs to strengthen our long term partnerships to meet the aspirations of the healthcare system in serving a common goal:

patients.

According to recent data, the out-of-pocket market remains Egypt's largest by far. How should our audience understand the current situation and the main dynamics of the private and public markets in the country?

At this point in time, the Egyptian pharma market is predominately driven by the private/out of pocket segment due to primary care products. However, the figures are quite different in terms of specialty care which in some cases can meet affordability challenges, and is mainly driven by the public sector. This reflects the government's role through presidential initiatives to broaden access to innovative treatments for patients in need.

As stated earlier, once the UHIA is enabled, covering the entire population, the whole equation will change.

We all have a role to play to enable transformation. At MSD, we lean into creating strong partnerships and always think about patients first. A key priority for us will be providing treatments and tailoring innovative solutions to finance those treatments that can include co-payments through patient support programs as well as managed entry agreements… This is the right time to provide treatment and find solutions to finance those treatments.

Innovation will come to the country; it will be part of the backbone of the universal health insurance scheme. Supporting patients and providing the right treatment at the right time, will remain a priority for everyone.

Raising awareness, education and capacity building are key to any sustainable transformation, How is MSD approaching that demand?

For decades, MSD and other multinationals have been focused on elevating scientific knowledge and supporting healthcare professionals (HCPs)' access to the most recent medical updates through various channels.

We now are looking to create more partnerships with the different government entities – we have a program to support the EDA with education and capacity building. Moreover, we recently signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with the UHIA to provide expertise around HTA in the assessment of different treatment options and the pharmacoeconomic science behind them.

Equally importantly, MSD is also actively working to strengthen patient groups so their voices can be heard. We strongly believe in the role that patient organizations play in raising awareness of different health topics and have an active presence on social media through different channels to raise proper awareness around different health concerns that includes promoting the early screening of cancer and HPV as well as providing a better quality of life for diabetics.

The success of the system will rely on input from patients, HCPs, the government and industry; everyone must have a seat at the table.

Apart from Egypt, you have a challenging group of countries in your cluster with Libya, Yemen, and Sudan. What can you share about those three markets?

Yemen is unfortunately a war zone and we have a limited amount of business through a local partner. Sudan is very interesting since there were economic sanctions on the country that have been removed. There, we are managing some regulatory work to register our brands and establish a relationship with a local partner.

In Libya we have quite a good presence, mostly coming from vaccines. The country has one of the best national immunisation programs (NIPs) in the Middle East; they are targeting branded vaccines to inoculate children and we have six vaccines included in the Libyan NIP covering different age groups.

Can you name three things you would like to accomplish during your tenure as managing director for the cluster?

I will always emphasize that MSD is keen to cultivate strong partnerships with different healthcare sectors, believing that we have an immense responsibility towards patients. I aspire to play an influential role in the lives of patients and have an impact on their treatment journey that can come through, enabling access through strategic partnerships, raising awareness as well as capacity building. We are continuously evolving our operating model to set the base for the future by enhancing customer engagement through digital and face-to-face as well as advancing data and analytics to more informed decisions. Last but surely not least, I pledge to maintain a healthy, diverse and inclusive culture where every team member feels heard and included.

I think the Egyptian pharma market has great potential, but any sustainable and successful transformation requires time and dedicated efforts; which we can all see happening on all levels.

We might continue facing economic challenges due to global circumstances, but the next phase will be bright. I foresee many opportunities in the market.

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