Eid Mansour – General Manager, Gilead Sciences Saudi Arabia



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Dr Eid Mansour, general manager of Gilead's new Saudi affiliate, shares the strategic goals behind the creation of a strong direct presence in a region previously managed almost entirely through distributors and how these goals align with the kingdom's Vision 2030 and the National Transformation Programme. He also outlines the partnerships the company is establishing with local healthcare authorities to assess HIV care pathways and identify opportunities and gaps, and the upcoming Saudi launch of a new injection therapy for HIV patients with multiple drugs resistance.

Could you give our audience a brief overview of your career trajectory up to this point?

My journey began several years ago as a medical doctor in Lebanon, where I had great hopes of changing the world. To further this goal, I pursued a master’s degree in health management in Paris, aiming to return to my home country and implement significant changes in the healthcare system. However, life’s twists and turns led me to the pharmaceutical industry, and I discovered that I can have a bigger impact by bringing innovation in disease management to serve a larger number of patients

In 2006, I started as a marketeer in Schering-Plough in Paris, just as the importance of market access was emerging. I quickly developed a passion for this field, which led me to spend five years consulting on access strategies for both French companies and multinational corporations. This experience paved the way for my role with Lundbeck, a Danish company, where I served as the global market access lead, launching innovative Central Nervous System (CNS) products in various countries.

Following this, I joined Otsuka, a Japanese company, to establish their European commercial entity. Over five years, I held roles such as Head Pricing for Europe, Head of Access in Spain and Head of Commercial Excellence in France. My journey then brought me to Gilead, where I saw an opportunity to return to the Middle East and undertake new professional challenges.

In Dubai, I took on the role of Head of Market Access for the Middle East region, building the department and team from the ground up. After three years, I transitioned to the role of Business Unit Director for HIV, which is a core area for Gilead. This role was particularly meaningful as it involved addressing significant unmet needs and reducing stigma around HIV in the region. Over the past three years, we have made considerable progress in improving the lives of people living with HIV, forging partnerships, and advancing policies related to HIV management.

Most recently, earlier this year, I was asked to establish Gilead’s affiliate in Saudi Arabia. This new challenge is incredibly exciting, and I look forward to contributing further to the company’s mission and expanding our impact in the Middle East.

Is the Saudi Arabia affiliate new for Gilead? What presence has the company had in the kindgdom up to this point?

Up until now, Gilead has had a presence in the region since the mid-2000s through its medications, but we operated mainly through distributors. In 2014, we established a regional office in Dubai, yet continued to rely on distributors in the individual markets.

This year marks a significant shift as we decided to establish our commercial entity in Saudi Arabia, Gilead Arabia. The decision to establish our presence in Saudi Arabia at this pivotal moment stems from a strategic alignment with both the evolving healthcare landscape in the Kingdom and Gilead’s unwavering commitment to address the significant unmet needs of patients.

As I mentioned earlier, we have a longstanding commitment to addressing life-threatening diseases like HIV, Hepatitis C, Hepatitis B, severe fungal infections, and now, expanding into oncology and

CAR T therapies. Patients and their interests are always at the forefront of our mission. We are committed to being closer to our patients, ensuring they have access to innovative medicines..

Establishing an affiliate in Saudi Arabia at this pivotal time is crucial. It allows us to be closer to stakeholders, better understand the market dynamics, and respond more effectively to the evolving needs. The presence on the ground provides us with better visibility and the ability to implement operations that directly address these needs.

Innovation is another critical factor. Saudi Arabia is currently focused on enhancing healthcare management and providing the best health outcomes to its citizens. The country's environment is conducive to introducing innovative therapies, aligning perfectly with Gilead's mission. This alignment between the country's objectives and Gilead's goals was the tipping point that led us to establish our affiliate in the kingdom.

When considering Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030 and the National Transformation Program, which emphasize improving healthcare management and fostering innovation, we recognized a unique opportunity to make a positive impact. We believe in this vision and the transformative journey the country is undertaking. By establishing our affiliate, we are showing our commitment to investing in Saudi Arabia's future and supporting this vision, always with the aim of better serving patients and the broader community.

On a personal level, this is your first general management role, a significant shift from your previous regional roles in specific disease areas. How have you found this transition? Has it been a big adjustment, or was it more of a natural progression?

It has been an interesting transition for me. While it is my first general management role, I have been in the region for the past eight years, managing Gilead's core business that represents a significant portion of its operations. Most of my work was focused on Saudi Arabia, so I am familiar with the market dynamics, the country's culture and the vision for the future.

My priorities for the time being consist of establishing the foundational framework for our new affiliate in Saudi Arabia to ensure efficiency and effectiveness of the operations, facilitating a seamless transition of business from local distributor to our in-house team without any disruptions, and actively recruiting local talents to form a skilled and diverse team.

Ultimately, our vision is Gilead to be dynamic player in the pharmaceutical landscape of Saudi Arabia, characterized by sustainable growth and recognized for innovation, patient and customer-

centricity, and a healthy work environment. We aspire to leverage our existing partnerships with local stakeholders, such as health authorities, healthcare providers, and patient groups, serving as genuine collaborators in the national transformation plan of the kingdom for the benefit of the patients and the community that we serve. It is about making a tangible impact and playing an active role in the healthcare ecosystem of the country, and contributing to building bridges to a healthier world

Considering the complexity of public health issues like HIV, Hepatitis C, and Hepatitis B, how do you plan to build partnerships with stakeholders to address these challenges and serve patients in Saudi Arabia?

Collaboration is essential for making a meaningful impact in addressing public health challenges. We have already established various partnerships in Saudi Arabia, collaborating with healthcare authorities, healthcare professionals, scientific societies, and patient communities. For instance, in addressing the HIV epidemic, we worked with the National AIDS Programme and the Saudi Society of Medical Microbiology and Infectious Diseases (SSMMID) to assess the HIV care pathway in Saudi, identify opportunities and gaps, and develop solutions aiming at ending the epidemic. Together, we identified key priorities such as awareness, testing, early treatment initiation, and patient counselling, and are implementing specific initiatives to address these priorities. Similar collaborative efforts have been undertaken resulting in establishing Memorandums of Understanding with the Ministry of Health for hepatitis and with the Saudi Oncology Society and the King Faisal Specialist Hospital and Research Centre for oncology, focusing on education, awareness, research, and improving disease management. Our goal is to be genuine partners contributing to optimizing management.

Saudi Arabia has ambitious plans to become a regional and global hub for biotechnology and research by 2030. What are your thoughts on the current potential of Saudi Arabia to host more research for Gilead?

Saudi Arabia presents an attractive hub for research, not only due to its focus on fostering research and clinical development but also because of its esteemed institutions and capabilities in both medical and research fields. These institutions have the capacity to conduct clinical trials and generate local evidence, contributing to better understanding the needs of the local population and finding suitable treatments. Saudi Arabia’s ecosystem provides an appealing environment for

medical management and research in the region.

Saudi Arabia has the capabilities to host clinical trials across various therapeutic areas. Our aim is to bring clinical trials to Saudi Arabia, in alignment with our commitment to advancing medical research in the region.

Building a diverse team with both local and international expertise is crucial. Could you elaborate on your approach to team-building in Saudi Arabia, particularly focusing on talent development and aligning everyone with the company's objectives?

Gilead values diversity and believes in investing in local talent development. We are impressed by the calibre of human capabilities in Saudi Arabia and aim to recruit and nurture local talents to become future leaders. While providing equal training opportunities to all team members, regardless of nationality, our focus is on developing a shared Gilead culture driven by purpose. Our purpose is to make a meaningful impact on patients' lives, and we are committed to fostering this culture among our team in Saudi Arabia to achieve our objectives.

Looking ahead, what are your short-term and medium-term goals for building the Gilead affiliate in Saudi Arabia?

In the short term, my primary goal is to establish the affiliate on a strong foundation. This involves ensuring that we have the right operational framework in place to seamlessly continue serving patients without any disruptions during the transition from distributors to our in-house team. Being close to the patients and the market, I am confident that there will be opportunities for us to have a bigger impact and fulfil our responsibilities as corporate citizens.

Gilead has a rich pipeline of innovative treatments, and we are eager to introduce these to the Saudi market. For example, our latest product, to be launched soon, addresses a high unmet need among highly treatment-experienced HIV patients with multiple drugs resistance and in whom the virus is not controlled. This innovative treatment, administered via injection every six months, allows for better suppression of the virus and brings hope to patients.

We believe that Gilead is the best poised to identify a future cure for HIV and our long-acting treatment and prevention programme will be pivotal in helping to end the epidemic. We are advancing a world-class oncology portfolio that includes some of the most promising targets in

cancer treatment today. We have the largest dedicated in-house cell therapy manufacturing network in the world where we partner with an extensive network of over 450 of the world's top hospitals and academic centres in oncology, including in Saudi, to deliver our cell therapy treatments. We are also advancing new options to address the needs of patients with viral hepatitis and are pursuing a cure for hepatitis B. And we are investing in treatments for emerging viruses, including new options for coronaviruses. Our focus is on bringing hope to patients and their families by continuously improving their lives with new and innovative treatments, which fully aligns with the Saudi vision to improve patient health outcomes

Beyond product launches**,** Gilead has been at the forefront of tackling some of the world's greatest public health challenges through partnerships with health authorities, healthcare professionals and patient communities. Through collaborations with local partners, we are committed to supporting new policies, programmes and initiatives that create a supportive environment for patients and address their diverse needs effectively. Our passion is to build bridges to a healthier world.

Is there any final message you would like to share with our global audience about Gilead's presence and your experiences in Saudi Arabia?

Gilead is fully aligned with Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030 and the National Transformation Plan. We remain committed to supporting the kingdom's healthcare goals, contributing to economic diversification, and fostering innovation-driven growth in the healthcare sector.

And personally, I am energized by the dynamic environment and the enthusiasm of the young generation which drives my contribution to the positive change in the country.

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