# Elias El Zoughbi – Country Manager Saudi Arabia, Terumo




***As the Kingdom cements its status as the North Star of the region, Terumo remains fully commit-ted to expanding its presence, driving healthcare innovation, and contributing to Saudi Arabia's long-term growth and modernization.***

30.04.2025

Tags: Saudi Arabia, Terumo, MedTech

*As Saudi Arabia reshapes its healthcare sector, Japanese-headquartered medtech player Terumo is deepening its presence, moving beyond market expansion to integration, innovation, and local manufacturing. Elias El Zoughbi, Country Manager for Terumo in Saudi Arabia, is at the helm of this transformation. Navigating a landscape where global expertise meets national ambition as the Kingdom positions itself at the forefront of medical and economic evolution.*

**How has your career at Terumo evolved, and what are your primary responsibilities in Saudi Arabia?**

With over two decades of experience in Saudi Arabia, I have developed a deep understanding of the market, working across both multinational and local organizations. I joined Terumo in 2015, initially leading sales across 22 countries, including North Africa, the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), Iran, Pakistan, and the Levant, with a focus on oncology and Peripheral Intervention products. I later transitioned into marketing, overseeing the full Terumo Interventional Systems portfolio for the same region. As part of my professional development, I completed an internal MBA at IE Business School in Spain, further strengthening my leadership and strategic expertise.

In 2021, as Terumo underwent a major restructuring in Saudi Arabia, I was appointed to lead this transition, leveraging my extensive market experience. This included spearheading the

establishment of our Regional Headquarters (RHQ)—a complex initiative requiring close coordination with the Ministry of Investment of Saudi Arabia, Deloitte, and various internal and external stakeholders to align regulatory, operational, and strategic frameworks.

Today, I serve as Country Manager for Terumo Interventional Systems in Saudi Arabia, overseeing market strategy and operations. Additionally, as Country Coordinator, I manage the administrative functions of other Terumo divisions under the RHQ, including Terumo Cardiovascular and Diabetes Management. While I do not oversee commercial activities for these divisions, I ensure regulatory compliance, financial governance, and the seamless integration of operations across all entities in Saudi Arabia.

**How has Terumo evolved globally, and what are its key focus areas in Saudi Arabia?**

Founded in 1921 by a Japanese physician, Terumo has grown into Japan’s foremost medical technology and pharmaceutical company, recognized for its century-long commitment to innovation and excellence. Initially known for its development of high-quality syringes, the company has expanded into a diverse portfolio that includes interventional systems, blood and cell technologies (BCT), neurovascular and aortic solutions, and other specialized healthcare fields. Today, Terumo operates in more than 124 countries, employs approximately 24,000 professionals, and generates USD six billion in annual revenue, positioning itself as a global leader in medtech.

While historically focused on its domestic market, Terumo has undergone a significant international expansion over the past five years, shifting from an even revenue split between Japan and global markets to an 80 percent share now coming from international operations. This rapid globalization, particularly in the US, China, Europe, the Middle East, and the Americas, has broadened the company’s footprint and diversified its operational landscape. Despite this transformation, Terumo has maintained its distinct corporate culture, carefully balancing its Japanese heritage with a more globalized approach.

In the Middle East, Terumo first established its presence in Dubai in 1994 and appointed its first distributor in Saudi Arabia in 1996, marking the beginning of its long-standing engagement in the region. However, recognizing the Kingdom’s growing role as a regional healthcare hub, Terumo accelerated its expansion in 2021, restructuring its distribution network, strengthening its local presence, and ultimately establishing its RHQ in 2024. This move reflects the company’s long-term strategy to be closer to the Saudi market, align with its evolving healthcare priorities, and contribute to the country’s medical advancements.

Saudi Arabia has also gained greater strategic visibility within both Terumo's leadership and the Japanese government. Ongoing high-level discussions between Terumo, the Japanese Ministry of Health, and the Saudi Ministry of Health (MoH) have fostered collaborations aimed at strengthening medical expertise and advancing healthcare initiatives. In a further demonstration of the Kingdom's importance, Terumo's President and CEO, Hikaru Samejima, is set to visit Saudi Arabia for the first time—a landmark event that underscores the country's growing significance within the company's global agenda.

**Why has Saudi Arabia become a key strategic priority for Terumo?**

Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030 has positioned the country as a focal point for economic diversification, regulatory modernization, and healthcare transformation, creating a highly attractive environment for global medtech companies. The government's emphasis on expanding healthcare infrastructure, fostering innovation, and developing local medical expertise has opened new avenues for international firms to contribute to the Kingdom's evolving healthcare ecosystem.

Beyond its economic and healthcare reforms, Saudi Arabia's long-standing diplomatic and economic ties with Japan—marked by political stability and mutual cooperation—have further reinforced Terumo's commitment to deepening its presence in the country. As the largest healthcare market in the region, Saudi Arabia offers unparalleled growth potential, driven by a rapidly advancing medical sector, a skilled workforce, and an increasing demand for cutting-edge healthcare solutions. By establishing its regional headquarters and expanding its partnerships, Terumo is demonstrating a long-term commitment to supporting Saudi Arabia's healthcare ambitions while solidifying its position as a key player in both the regional and global medtech industry.

**How has Saudi Arabia's healthcare transformation influenced Terumo's operations?**

Saudi Arabia's healthcare sector is undergoing a profound transformation, driven by privatization, decentralization, and expanded access to care. Previously, the MoH managed nearly 90 percent of the market, but with the rise of National Unified Procurement Company (NUPCO), the expansion of private sector involvement, and a shift toward localized procurement, the landscape has evolved significantly.

For Terumo, this shift initially required strategic adjustments in navigating new procurement processes, reallocating resources, and aligning with emerging market dynamics. However, it has ultimately created new opportunities, expanding engagement beyond the MoH to include private hospitals, regional healthcare clusters, and independent procurement channels. This transition has broadened market access, fostering a more dynamic and competitive environment.

A key advantage of these reforms is the geographical expansion of healthcare services. While access was once concentrated in major cities like Riyadh and Jeddah, investments in regional and remote areas are making advanced medical solutions more widely available. This evolution aligns with Terumo's long-term vision, enabling the company to extend its reach, enhance partnerships, and contribute to the Kingdom's rapidly advancing healthcare ecosystem.

**What are the key growth drivers for Terumo in Saudi Arabia?**

Terumo's expansion in Saudi Arabia is largely driven by its oncology and cardiology portfolios, two areas where the company delivers highly specialized solutions to meet the country's evolving healthcare needs. In interventional oncology, Terumo is among the few companies offering a comprehensive "access-to-closure" solution, covering the entire patient journey from vascular access to final closure. Its portfolio includes radioembolization, embolization beads, and coils for liver cancer treatment, along with industry-leading access devices—critical tools without which some hospitals would be unable to perform certain procedures.

In cardiology, Terumo's growth is fueled by the rising incidence of cardiovascular disease in Saudi Arabia, driven by lifestyle factors such as low physical activity. The company provides cutting-edge, often irreplaceable solutions that are integral to Catheterization Laboratories (Cath Labs) across the Kingdom. Many of its products have no direct alternatives, making Terumo a trusted and indispensable partner for physicians and healthcare providers. With a commitment to ensuring continuous access to life-saving technologies, Terumo plays a pivotal role in advancing oncology and cardiology care, reinforcing its reputation as a leader in interventional medical solutions in Saudi Arabia.

**How is Terumo contributing to Saudi Arabia's healthcare transformation through education and innovation?**

Education is at the core of Terumo’s contribution to Saudi Arabia’s evolving healthcare landscape, particularly in interventional cardiology, where Japan has pioneered minimally invasive procedures as an alternative to open-heart surgery. Unlike many other regions, Japanese physicians have long developed expertise in complex interventions that avoid surgical procedures, making their knowledge highly valuable in Saudi Arabia. To bridge knowledge gaps and support local expertise, Terumo has established structured educational programs, offering Saudi physicians immersive training in Japan, where they gain direct exposure to advanced techniques at Terumo’s world-class medical facilities. Additionally, the company facilitates on-site clinical mentorship in Saudi hospitals, where Japanese specialists collaborate with local teams in Cath Labs to refine procedural skills and introduce the latest interventional methods.

The impact of these initiatives is evident in the increasing adoption of less invasive procedures. Previously, conditions such as chronic total occlusion—which involves fully blocked arteries—were predominantly treated with open-heart surgery due to the lack of specialized intervention skills. However, as Terumo’s training programs continue to expand, more physicians are now equipped to perform catheter-based treatments, leading to shorter recovery times, fewer complications, and greater overall efficiency in patient care.

Beyond providing cutting-edge medical solutions, Terumo has positioned itself as an educational partner, actively shaping the future of interventional medicine in Saudi Arabia. By fostering clinical expertise and supporting healthcare professionals, the company is playing a key role in advancing the Kingdom’s vision for a world-class, patient-centered healthcare system.

**How is Terumo integrating digitalization and new technologies into its healthcare solutions?**

As Saudi Arabia accelerates its adoption of digital healthcare innovations, Terumo is integrating advanced imaging, AI-driven analytics, and cloud-based platforms to enhance clinical decision-making, procedural planning, and hospital efficiency. A key advancement is quantitative flow ratio (QFR), a cutting-edge digital imaging solution that allows physicians to assess coronary blood flow without requiring traditional catheter-based fractional flow reserve measurements. By eliminating the need for physical intervention, QFR enables faster, more precise diagnostics, improving patient outcomes while reducing procedural complexity. In Saudi Arabia, Terumo has already partnered with a supplier to integrate this technology, marking a significant step toward non-invasive cardiovascular assessment.

Beyond imaging, Terumo has introduced Showpad, a cloud-based digital platform that provides physicians with instant access to product specifications, procedural guidelines, and real-time patient data. Fully interoperable with hospital systems, it ensures seamless integration across medical infrastructure, enabling healthcare professionals to analyze patient history, procedural insights, and critical case data at a glance. With cloud storage replacing traditional local servers, physicians can now access information on demand, streamlining workflows and enhancing efficiency across healthcare institutions. By combining AI-driven diagnostics, cloud connectivity, and digital imaging, Terumo is redefining how interventional procedures are planned and executed, reinforcing its commitment to advancing medical innovation and precision-driven healthcare in Saudi Arabia.

**How do you foster a strong organizational culture at Terumo’s Regional Headquarters in Saudi Arabia?**

At Terumo, people are at the heart of success, and cultivating the right talent is as essential as having a strong vision and cutting-edge products. Historically, the company’s Middle East operations were led by Japanese executives, but as globalization reshaped the business, Terumo transitioned to a diverse leadership structure, proving that operational excellence can be achieved while preserving the company’s core values.

One of the most significant transformations has been the integration of Saudi talent. While Saudi nationals once made up only one in 25 employees, they now represent 44 percent of the workforce—a shift driven not by quotas but by their exceptional skills, dedication, and ability to contribute meaningfully to the company’s growth. This evolution reflects Terumo’s strong belief in nurturing talent, investing in development, and fostering an environment where employees can thrive.

Terumo’s corporate culture is deeply rooted in Japanese principles of respect, care, and integrity, shaping a work environment that prioritizes long-term professional growth, well-being, and employee engagement. The company’s commitment extends beyond performance metrics, ensuring that its people feel valued, empowered, and motivated to drive innovation and excellence. This approach not only strengthens the organization but also reinforces Terumo’s role in shaping Saudi Arabia’s evolving healthcare landscape.

**What are Terumo’s strategic priorities for the next two years, and how do you view Saudi Arabia’s evolving role in the region?**

Terumo’s immediate priority in Saudi Arabia is to consolidate its operations into a unified entity, integrating divisions such as Terumo Interventional Systems and Terumo BCT under a single corporate structure. Currently, these units operate independently, but bringing them together will enhance efficiency, market positioning, and strategic alignment, allowing Terumo to present itself as a USD 100 million healthcare leader rather than as separate business segments. This restructuring will improve collaboration, stakeholder engagement, and overall competitiveness in the Saudi market.

Looking further ahead, local manufacturing is a key milestone, aligning with Saudi Arabia’s Vision 2030 objectives of localization, economic diversification, and industrial growth. Establishing production capabilities within the Kingdom would not only increase access to advanced medical solutions but also reinforce Terumo’s long-term commitment to the region’s economic and healthcare transformation. While still in the planning phase, this initiative reflects a broader strategy to expand Terumo’s impact beyond healthcare and contribute meaningfully to national development efforts.

Saudi Arabia has traditionally been the economic hub of the Middle East, but today, it is rapidly positioning itself as a global center for business, innovation, and cultural transformation. Its strategic vision, economic reforms, and increasing openness are attracting investment, talent, and multinational corporations, creating unprecedented opportunities across industries. As the Kingdom cements its status as the North Star of the region, Terumo remains fully committed to expanding its presence, driving healthcare innovation, and contributing to Saudi Arabia’s long-term growth and modernization.

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