

Roch Ogier – CEO, OM Pharma



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Dr. Roch Ogier, CEO of OM Pharma, brings a strong background spanning clinical medicine, neuroscience research, and leadership roles at Sanofi-Aventis, Vifor Pharma, and Novartis. Over the past eighteen months, he has driven solid growth and positioned the company as a leader in bacterial lysates, innovative therapies derived from selected bacterial strains that help regulate the immune system.

Could you provide our readers with an overview of your professional journey and the circumstances that led to your appointment as CEO of OM Pharma eighteen months ago?

My journey began with medical training in Geneva, followed by neuroscience research alongside clinical practice and entrepreneurial ventures. I then spent 15 years in pharma, starting at Sanofi-Aventis and later Vifor Pharma, where I connected with many current OM Pharma colleagues. At Novartis, I served as Chief Scientific Officer for Switzerland, gaining valuable management experience. Seeking broader exposure, I joined the University of Zurich to launch a life sciences incubator and engaged in venture capital with a California-based firm and a collaboration with the Novartis Venture Fund. This experience paved the way for my return to OM Pharma, where I led business development and innovation, became COO, and now serve as CEO.

What attracted you specifically to OM Pharma, given your experience with larger pharmaceutical corporations such as Sanofi and Novartis?

Two compelling factors influenced my decision. Firstly, the personal dimension, I was approached by the previous CEO who had been my general manager during my tenure at Vifor Pharma. This existing relationship, combined with familiarity with numerous team members, created a natural affinity for the organisation.

Secondly, the strategic opportunity presented itself as genuinely entrepreneurial – building upon established foundations whilst pursuing ambitious expansion objectives. This combination of proven assets and transformational potential proved irresistible.

For readers unfamiliar with bacterial lysates, could you explain what they are and why they matter?

Bacterial lysates are innovative therapies, grounded in clinical research, derived from selected bacterial strains that help regulate the immune system. As part of the manufacturing process, we cultivate diverse bacterial populations, eliminate their pathogenic potential, whilst preserving their immunological properties. This process results in products that train immune systems to respond appropriately to microbial threats.

Lysates are important in today's changing world where we face new challenges – increasingly burdened by chronic conditions and antimicrobial resistance, as well as a lack of exposure to a diversity of microbes, which help build and support immune health from the youngest of ages.

It is clear that focusing solely on cures is not enough. At OM Pharma we offer a different approach with our lysates and one which we hope will contribute to reducing preventable suffering associated with recurrent respiratory and urinary tract infections. Infections such as these can be extremely disruptive for individuals and communities alike.

Can you provide a comprehensive overview of OM Pharma's current business model and market positioning?

OM Pharma has maintained a presence in Geneva since 1937. Our portfolio centres on bacterial lysates addressing respiratory and urinary tract infection prevention. Beyond our core bacterial lysate portfolio, we maintain a global vascular health division featuring two products. Our

international presence spans one hundred countries globally.

Additionally, we operate a comprehensive Swiss portfolio encompassing over thirty products—approximately half proprietary developments and half in-licensed products from strategic partners. This Swiss portfolio covers in particular pulmonology, women's health, and neurology, representing approximately CHF sixty million in annual revenue and constituting a significant contributor to our overall performance.

How does your international distribution strategy function across these diverse markets?

We predominantly favour partnership-based distribution models, maintaining over ninety strategic partnerships worldwide. Two notable exceptions exist: Switzerland, where we operate our own commercial organisation, and Central America and Peru, where we maintain direct presence through our Lima affiliate managing eight countries collectively.

This Latin American presence reflects historical relationships, we have team members with over thirty years of regional experience, establishing us as specialists in these markets. Our partnership model enables global reach whilst maintaining operational efficiency and local market expertise.

What is the current competitive landscape for bacterial lysates, and how does OM Pharma maintain its leadership position?

OM Pharma pioneered bacterial lysate development, with preliminary preparations dating to 1930 and formal establishment by 1937. We remain a market leader, operating the world's largest bacterial lysate manufacturing facility in Geneva and maintaining the strongest commitment to this therapeutic category.

Whilst competitors exist, they operate at significantly smaller scales. The addressable market is virtually unlimited, our current indications target anyone seeking to prevent recurrent respiratory or urinary tract infections, spanning all age groups and genders. Our current research focuses on recurrent respiratory infections targets asthma and wheezing applications, representing the next strategic indication for expansion.

Clinical research appears central to your strategic vision. What specific ambitions and recent progress can you share regarding your pipeline development?

Research and development represent the cornerstone of our strategic transformation. When Etienne Jornod reacquired OM Pharma from Vifor Pharma in 2020 – having previously acquired it for Vifor Pharma in 2009 – his vision involved reinvesting all profits into R&D to fundamentally alter the trajectory of bacterial lysate development.

This transformation serves dual purposes: accessing new markets that require contemporary clinical evidence beyond our historical regulatory dossiers and establishing new therapeutic indications. Our primary target market is the United States, representing approximately forty percent of global pharmaceutical markets.

In the US market, we are conducting specific studies in paediatric wheezing -essentially childhood asthma. Success in this indication would establish us as the first bacterial lysate therapy approved in the United States, with significant commercial prospects.

You have established notable academic partnerships. How do these collaborations enhance your research capabilities?

We collaborate extensively with leading academic institutions, including groups at Helmholtz Institute in Munich under Professor Erika von Mutius, and at the University of Arizona under the lead of Professor Fernando Martinez.

These researchers are pioneers in “farm effect” studies which explore protective effects from early exposure to diverse microbial antigens present in rural environments. They are interested in our bacterial lysate technology and how it can replicate the protective effects of natural and diverse microbial exposure. Their interest stems from practical limitations—whilst they may prefer to utilise actual farm dust, such approaches are impossible to standardise or ensure safety for pharmaceutical development. Our bacterial lysates provide them with GMP-manufactured products with reproducible quality at commercial scale, making their research vision practically achievable.

How is OM Pharma received in new markets, particularly given the novel nature of bacterial lysates?

Brand recognition remains an ongoing development priority. Recognition varies significantly established markets with decades of presence understand OM Pharma and our products, whilst newer markets require further education.

My role involves elevating brand awareness, but more critically, communicating the compelling scientific rationale behind our products. We consider our bacterial lysates to be exceptional therapeutic assets—our responsibility involves effectively articulating their mechanisms of action and integration into preventive healthcare strategies.

What market dynamics are creating momentum for bacterial lysate adoption?

Several converging factors are creating unprecedented momentum. We are seeing many new challenges in today's world. These include the increase in chronic conditions and related exacerbations driven partially by changing environments, limited exposure to microbes, and other increasingly urgent challenges such as antimicrobial resistance.

It is also clear that the COVID-19 pandemic fundamentally shifted healthcare mentalities, highlighting our inadequate pandemic preparedness and the inevitability of future pandemics, potentially including antimicrobial-resistant bacterial threats.

This realisation has elevated infection prevention strategies to immediate priority status in discussions with regulatory authorities and healthcare leaders. The concept of preventing infections entirely, rather than treating them post-onset, has gained substantial traction.

How does OM Pharma contribute to broader antimicrobial resistance discussions?

Antimicrobial resistance has re-emerged as a concrete concern rather than a distant theoretical threat. Our bacterial lysates contribute to this challenge by potentially reducing infection occurrence altogether, thereby decreasing antibiotic utilisation and resistance development pressure.

This prevention-focused approach aligns with global health initiatives seeking alternatives to traditional antimicrobial therapies.

Sustainability appears prominent in your corporate communications. How do you approach environmental and social responsibility?

I maintain a pragmatic perspective on sustainability initiatives. At OM Pharma, our approach emphasises practical implementations with demonstrable return on investment. Sustainability initiatives must integrate with business objectives to ensure long-term adoption rather than superficial compliance exercises. For manufacturing operations, water and energy efficiency improvements reduce operational costs whilst supporting environmental objectives. We pursue measured implementations that demonstrate business value, ensuring sustainability initiatives themselves remain sustainable.

What advantages does Switzerland provide for OM Pharma's global operations?

Beyond the standard Swiss advantages of stability, security, and innovation infrastructure that benefit all pharmaceutical companies, Switzerland provides critical quality perception benefits. When we engage with markets in China, Latin America, and other regions, Swiss origin conveys premium quality associations, particularly crucial for biotechnology products manufactured from pathogenic bacteria.

Geneva provides unique advantages beyond general Swiss benefits. We represent the only company headquartered in Geneva distributing healthcare products to one hundred countries whilst maintaining complete vertical integration—from initial bacterial culture through to final packaging.

Entrepreneurship features prominently in your corporate values. How does this manifest in practice?

Entrepreneurship is one of our five core values, setting us apart from traditional pharmaceutical companies. Inspired by Etienne Jornod's leadership in building Galenica and Vifor Pharma, our approach values persistence and follow-through over innovation for its own sake.

We take calculated risks with disciplined execution, staying focused on clear strategic goals. This reflects our commitment to thoughtful, long-term growth over speculative ventures.

What advice would you offer to entrepreneurs in the pharmaceutical sector?

The pharmaceutical industry demands patience and long-term perspective whilst executing methodically toward strategic goals. Our shareholders and board understand that pharmaceutical R&D requires decade-long timelines, with manufacturing scale-up requiring additional years.

Success requires sustained commitment to strategic objectives without frequent pivoting. We benefit from this long-term perspective, operating with nearly century-long institutional history and planning for continued multi-century operations.

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