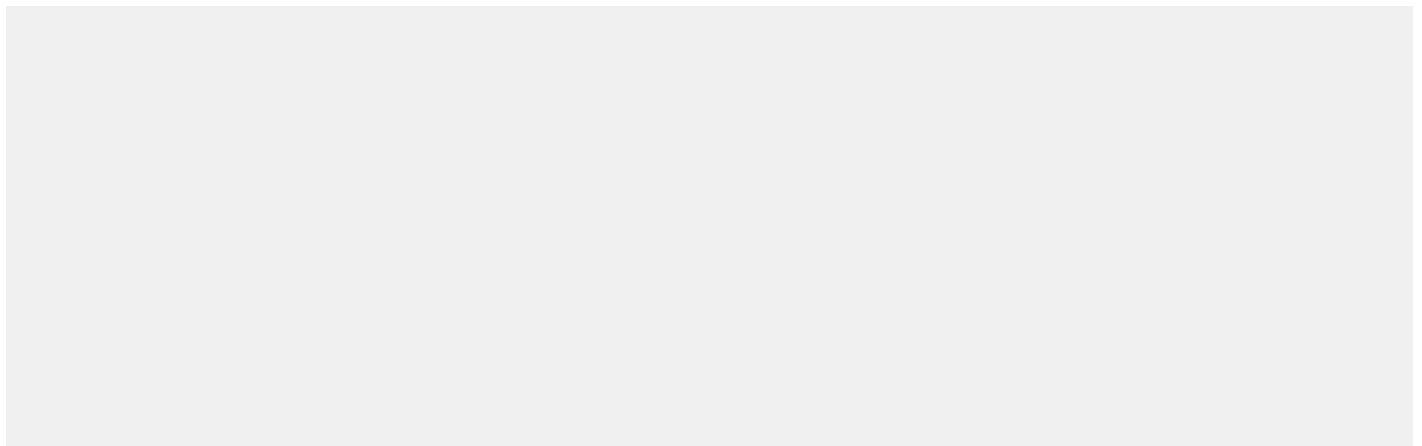


Interview with Sherif Shehata, General Manager, Aamal Medical



10.06.2012

Tags: [Aamal Medical](#)

Mr. Shehata, one year after you joined Aamal Medical, Aamal Company went public on the Qatar stock exchange. How did the listing affect your operations at the Medical division?

There were many changes implemented, because a number of governance and quality control elements came into the picture. We were faced with many new rules and guidelines.

We believe that the implementation of these guidelines created a significantly better image for the company—especially from the point of view of suppliers. Once a company is publically listed, the level of trust from partners is elevated.

There is an abundance of marketing activities being executed at the Group level. Of course, these activities have pushed the entire organization to improve their business. The Medical division is no exception—despite the fact that within our division, our work is very specialized. Looking back, I believe that going public truly enhanced our business.

How would you evaluate the overall performance of Aamal Medical in terms of indicators like turnover and market share?

Our turnover has fluctuated year over year. For an Aamal Company division like EBN SINA, the scenario is different, as the pharmaceutical distribution business is more constant. On our part, there are a limited number of hospitals in the region—and a hospital that may buy a particular

piece of equipment one year, may not do so the next year. We also cannot compare one category of equipment to another.

Nonetheless, we can say that we typically account for 30-35% of market turnover. Looking at the number of products we supply, we are a leader, with over 50% of market share.

Aamal Medical has managed to secure exclusive partnerships with noted global enterprises like Fresenius and GE. Why do you believe these organizations chose Aamal as their partner?

Firstly, reputation is very important. Furthermore, the service support that we provide is very unique in Qatar. Our response time ranges from 20 minutes to 3 hours. Within this period, at minimum, a member of our staff will be there to help. In most hospitals, we have an engineer stationed to await any call. We constantly evaluate the response of our personnel.

Our company is also known to be selective. It is not only a matter of suppliers selecting us—we carefully select our suppliers. We are an ISO-certified company that conducts supplier evaluation, even though we are speaking, as you mentioned, of big names. We have terminated our relationship with certain suppliers that are not up to the standard that we seek to cultivate. This bolsters our credibility amongst both suppliers and customers.

Aamal Medical not only sells medical equipment to healthcare facilities, but also proposes an array of other services to its clients. Can you elaborate on the integrated solutions that the company offers?

Our main business, of course, remains the sale of equipment. However, this segment has come to constitute 40% of what we do. Today, another 40% is constituted by consumables, and 20% is in IT.

IT for us always means a large project. There are implementation phases that evolve year after year. We offer hospital information systems, digital archiving for medical imaging, and etc. We also work to provide interfacing engines, which we have already supplied to a number of hospitals. We provide the ability to interface any equipment and any piece of software with the hospital information system—this is a very sophisticated, reliable product; its implementation is not easy. We try to be high tech, and we try to be unique. Today, you have to be innovative to be competitive.

IT will become a bigger and bigger portion of our business. The whole world is moving in a more digitized direction. By 2013, the U.S. will likely be completely paperless in the medical field—this is the example we strive to follow in Qatar.

One of the key assets of Aamal Company has been its HR excellence. How do you recruit the best talent at Aamal Medical, and how do you retain it?

Recruitment is not easy in the medical field, due to the limited availability of experienced and professional people in this sector. There are many people that claim medical backgrounds, but at the time of interview, the story is completely different.

We try to expand our recruitment base, and search for people at conferences, sales meetings, and from abroad. We have staff today from Egypt, Jordan, Syria, and even Germany.

How do we keep them? This is a question we constantly think about, because, as I said, it is not easy to find good people. We strive to keep them satisfied!

When we met with Mr. Samy Hanna of EBN SINA, he mentioned that the next step for the company was to conquer the Gulf and beyond. Is Aamal Medical looking at expanding outside of Qatar?

There is a plan to expand, but we need also to focus on our home market. We will not take steps to go abroad until we are sure that we can really provide support from the service and application side. If we are to leave Qatar, we must be able to provide the same level of quality as we do within Qatar. Until we have the resources do so, we will not move. As I mentioned, our field is very specialized, and the customer expects a very high caliber of assistance. We must think of our reputation, and we will not go abroad simply for financial reasons. If we will do it, we will do it in the proper way.

Where would you like to take your operations over the next 3-4 years?

As we discussed, IT is becoming more and more important for us. We started with IT representing 5% of our business—now we are at 20% and growing. It is today an essential requirement to build proper databases for patients, and etc. There is no longer any value for the medical field in paper records.

Medical equipment and the consumer sector, however, will also continue to play major roles for us.

As an Egyptian, to what degree did you have to adapt your management style to the Qatari people?

Again, in the highly specialized medical field, the language is a bit different. It is not a matter of whether you are from Egypt, from Qatar, or from somewhere else. Additionally, in Qatar, many doctors have come from abroad. The medical community here is multicultural—but as medical experts, we all speak the same language.

What is your final message to the international readers of Pharmaceutical Executive?

We want to try to use technology and IT as much as we can, because it is truly the future. I do not send this message because some people don't know that this is the case; rather, some people resist the rise of technology. I am thankful that this resistance is not present at the highest levels, because the highest levels are interested in advancing progress. It is rather some nurses or doctors that sometimes believe that technology is useless. We spend a lot of time with them to try to convince them that technology is important; and once they understand the role it plays in controlling medication and saving the lives of patients, and how with the push of a button, you can have a patient's entire medical history in front of you, they come around. This is a future I believe we must all help to realize.

[See more interviews](#)