Interview: Emad Abdel Moniem – General Manager; Khaled Gabr – Export Marketing Director, Tabuk Pharmaceuticals, Egypt



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Tabuk Pharmaceuticals, the largest private Saudi pharmaceutical company with commercial operations in 25 countries in middle east and 5 European countries with a portfolio of more than 250 products, chose Egypt to consolidate its international presence in the Middle East and North Africa. The general manager for Egypt and Sudan and the marketing director for Middle East and North Africa discuss the future plans of the company.

Egypt is a very competitive market with leading international companies and strong national manufacturers. How much room is there for a company such as Tabuk to play?

Quality is the key. We are the largest private Saudi pharmaceutical company with commercial operations in 25 countries in Middle East and 5 European countries with a portfolio of more than

250 products. So Tabuk is well known in the Egyptian market as one of the international pharmaceuticals companies which is associated with high-quality drugs.

In addition, we selected with care the products to penetrate the market: we started with injectable antibiotic products and are tapping into therapeutic areas, such as chronic diseases, to fulfill local unmet medical needs thanks to the large product base we rely upon in our portfolio.

As the largest private Saudi pharmaceutical company, what is the vision for Tabuk's presence in Egypt?

Five years ago Tabuk's management set a clear vision for the company: being one of the leading drug companies in the Middle East. The company started international operations in markets such as whole Gulf area, north Africa such Morocco, Tunisia, Algeria and Ethiopia, and Sudan.

In 2011 we decided to establish the first manufacturing site outside the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA). We acquired an existing manufacturing site in Sudan, renovated it and started manufacturing our products. Today, Tabuk is the second largest company in the Sudanese market.

Tabuk has been present in Egypt since 2004, with turnover of just EGP 2 million (USD 255 thousand) in the first year, while last year it surpassed EGP 150 million (USD 19 million).

Today, the company has set the clear objective to strengthen its presence in Egypt through local manufacturing. So we acquired a manufacturing site in Badr City and currently, we are in the process of renovating it completely in order to match with Tabuk standards and GMP guidelines, we expect to have the site fully certified by the Ministry Of Health before the end of 2017. Our goal is to build market share, and with the plant we will have a good foothold to support this effort.

By 2020 Tabuk will be one of the top international companies operating in Egypt. Our plan is to increase our current turnover by two to three folds.

To accelerate our expansion, we have acquired several strategically selected product files, as in Egypt you need approximately three to four years to register a new product. With these product files and others that we have already successfully registered, we started toll contract manufacturing and on January 1st 2016, we launched our first locally manufactured drugs. Once our Egyptian manufacturing facility comes online next year, we will transfer the production of these products to our own facility.

What role will the Egyptian organization play in supplying other markets?

Since 2010 we have managed all the business outside Saudi Arabia from Egypt. We selected the country because of its potential and its strategic position. We expect the regional office to continue its operations and get access to other markets.

We plan to invest in Egypt and use the country as a hub to export to other countries. The idea is to establish a sister company to take advantage of trading facilities as, for instance, for the purchasing of raw materials in bulk.

We have a strong manufacturing site in Sudan but it just fulfills Sudanese market demand. Once our Egyptian facility is operational, we want to expand our business in the rest of Africa using the production capacity of our plant in Egypt.

What is the importance of having Pan-Arab standards for the pharmaceutical industry?

There is an ongoing process to unify the registration process with local health authorities and our colleagues in Jordan and the KSA. We are one of the few Arab companies following international GMPs. We have already started unifying standards in Egypt and other countries to set parameters and guidelines such antibiotics guidelines, Pharmacovigilance master files, Risk management plans, and others.

What are your main priorities for Tabuk in Egypt for the next five years?

To establish Tabuk’s position in the Egyptian market as one of the top international pharmaceutical companies of Saudi origin. Strengthening our presence in Egypt is one of Tabuk’s corporate goals during the next five years.

Our strategy is based on three pillars: high-tech local manufacturing facilities, a strong portfolio and talented human capital.

High-tech local manufacturing facilities; we are completely renovating our factory in Badr city according to Tabuk and GMP standards. It will be equipped with the latest technology in pharmaceutical manufacturing. Tabuk Misr plant will be a real addition to the pharmaceutical industry in Egypt

Strong portfolio; in addition to our strong presence in the field of injectable antibiotics and acute diseases, we are penetrating chronic diseases areas such cardiovascular, the metabolic area, and CNS, with a special eye on diabetes and hepatitis. We will also have a focus on OTC products. We want to fulfill the gaps where there are unmet medical needs.

Talented human capital; Today, we have a field force of around 250 in Egypt. We believe in human capital, so we have very strong plans for investment in our people for development and training. Our aim is to have one of the most competitive and strongest teams in the market. On the other hand, with our business expansion in Egypt, we will need to hire more people so that our manpower will be doubled within the next 5 years. This is in addition to the many job opportunities which will be opened by the start of our factory operation.

Could you please briefly introduce yourselves to our readers?

Khaled Gabr: I joined Tabuk almost five years ago, at the beginning of what was called the Tabuk New Future Project 2015, but have worked in the pharmaceutical field for almost 25 years. I started my career at Park Davis pharmaceutical company, later sold to Pfizer, and then shifted to a Middle East marketing services provider's regional office to represent a group of medium-sized multinational companies operating in the Arab world – Mundipharma of Switzerland, Cheisi of Italy, Allmiral of Spain and Recordati of Italy – where I stayed for 13 years. After that, I joined Tabuk as marketing director for Middle East and North Africa.

Emad Abdel Moniem: I have worked in the pharmaceutical industry for almost twenty five years, with most of my experience at French drug manufacturer Sanofi for 23 years where I worked in different fields (Sales, Marketing, Commercial, Hospital business). I joined Tabuk at the beginning of 2015 as general manager for Nile Valley region which includes Egypt and Sudan.

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