# Shahnas Oli Mohamed – Co-Founder and Managing Director, Natural Wellness, Malaysia



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*Shahnas Oli Mohamed, the managing director of Natural Wellness Holdings Sdn Bhd, expresses the important work that Natural Wellness has done to provide natural healthcare products to Malaysian patients, including a specific halal line to satisfy the community's needs in that area. She also identifies the opportunities Natural Wellness will leverage to further grow in Malaysia and in foreign markets.*

**Could you introduce our readers to Natural Wellness and the company's scope of operation?**

Natural Wellness is a company owned by a gastroenterologist and a pharmacist with experience in Big Pharma. Dr Amr Yacout, my partner, is based in Egypt, and myself here in Kuala Lumpur. Sometimes, working in a large company means that employees are obliged to do things that they wouldn't always choose to do and subscribe to someone else's values. When we started Natural Wellness, we wanted to operate according to our values. Thus, we established the company with a very simple mission: to help make people healthy through natural means and to provide Shariah-compliant healthcare products. Since our founding, we have grown tremendously, and have multiplied the company value by more than 10 folds. We currently employ over 100 people across three continents and represent a mix of multinational companies, regional players and local

businesses.

We are humbled to be known as a leading value-based healthcare player specialized in the research, development, formulation and manufacturing of healthcare products including natural based, over the counter as well as beauty solutions. We are looking at moving up the healthcare value chain into other spaces. Our business model focuses on white labelling, private labelling and contract manufacturing. We provide our original formulas to clients who commercialize them under their own brands. We provide product exclusivity to our customers. We offer one of the fastest routes to market commercialization strategy in the market. If there is a request regarding a product, it has to be formulated from scratch and it can take over two years for a company to market it in the country. Natural Wellness already has an inventory of more than 200 pre-registered innovative products ready to go to market, covering ailments such as hypertension and diabetes. If there is interest in one of our formulas, we are able to custom package the products for the client in a short time.

**What are your main product areas?**

We have products covering a range of therapeutic areas from weight management to nutrition. We not only provide natural products but also supplements, cosmetics, OTCs and we are looking into market expansion aggressively. Moreover, we offer a comprehensive number of niche formulas based on the Quran and the Hadith. This business line is called “The Prophet’s Medicine”.

Natural Wellness is currently looking at expanding our manufacturing capabilities. We have reached about 70 percent of our total capacity and have the need for additional space which, of course. would help chart our growth in the future. The new facility will allow us to produce 15 to 20 times more than our current production capacity. Moreover, it will enable us to diversify and move up the value chain, enhancing skill sets and offerings, especially in research and development activities.

**How would you summarize the potential within the halal medicine sector?**

The industry for halal and Shariah-compliant products is growing rapidly because of a greater market awareness, and greater acceptance of these products. This market has at least 1.6 billion customers globally. In Malaysia, we are aided by the fact that it is easy to register halal products. We have a robust ecosystem in place, with the government promoting the halal agenda and

Malaysia as a Halal manufacturing hub, all translating to benefit consumers and patients to offer possibilities to patients. Their concept of halal medicines in Malaysia is as such: if patients have the halal option available, they are free to take it. If they do not, they can choose among the remaining solutions. One is not obliged to forgo a treatment if it is not halal.

Thus, as an industry player, we take it as a personal obligation to avail a halal and Shariah-compliant option to the community. We are a company founded on Shariah compliance and the first company in Malaysia to obtain the MS 1900:2014 Shariah-based Quality Management System and stand at the forefront of Halal Manufacturing expertise. Aiming for halal healthcare also means no alcohol contamination, pork, blood or carcass contamination during the entire production and distribution process which aligns with the GMP standards referring to the efficacy, safety and efficiency of a drug. In fact, halal healthcare should include Syariah compliance in all business activities as well. I personally believe that there is a synergy between halal, principles, Syariah compliance and healthcare regulations.

**Where are the other areas of high growth potential for Natural Wellness?**

In the natural products space, we are humbled to have some of the biggest brands as our customers. Therefore, our growth strategy has to be that one is crafted carefully as own brand could spell competition with our customer. Hence, we look towards developing our current portfolio and expanding our presence to other markets, both in geographically and in market space to increase our customer base and build a presence in new overseas markets.

**What are your main priorities for the next three to five years?**

The successful relocation to a new larger premise to accommodate growing company needs and expansion plan. Secondly, to see a greater investment in our human resources. The human capital aspect of the business is always difficult to manage, but we are endeavoring to develop our business around our people, so that we can achieve a better work-life balance for our staff. We would like to place a greater emphasis of life for our people.

**What would be your advice to females in the industry, who are aspiring to establish their own company and replicate your success?**

We are not created the same or even to be similar. In our system the female has a very special status, not to be compared to the male. Even so, the drive to be excellent should be taken up by both genders and should be with patience, perseverance and prayer.

Natural Wellness also actively supports the empowerment of women via its own independent foundation, The Farrash Foundation, which organizes initiatives in different fields to support Malaysian women. One of their initiatives is Sama Sama Spa which is aimed at helping underprivileged young women to gain experience and opportunities in micro-entrepreneurship.

**As the founder of the company, what would you say has been your proudest achievement?**

One of the most gratifying feelings is to see our company grow from a small start-up with three people to the position we are in today. It is indeed a ‘wow’ moment to be able to witness the development of some of our people. From very modest backgrounds they began their careers with us on the production line, building themselves up to be leading managers, acquiring an education and improving their socio-economic status along the way. Having said that, we all have hopes and dreams. We pray that the best of Natural Wellness is yet to come.

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