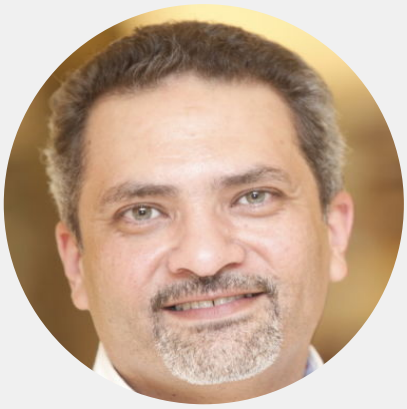
Mohamed Galal – Vice President, Head of the Middle East, Bayer Consumer Health



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Mohamed Galal, VP and Head of Bayer's Consumer Health Division in the Middle East, draws upon his 16 years of experience with the company to discuss their digitalization approach to position themselves as the partner of choice. Moreover, he reveals how the UAE is taking an innovative approach to addressing 21st-century health challenges and Bayer's actions to be at the forefront of that effort.

To start off, can you explain Bayer's footprint in the Middle East as well as the importance of the region to the global operations of the group?

Bayer has been present in the Middle East for over 85 years, although the physical presence of the company in this particular region can be traced back to the 1880s. The Bayer Group is a global enterprise with companies in 90 countries and the Middle East is one of the fastest-growing areas for us; our investments in the region are a reflection of that. We now have legal entities in Egypt, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, with the regional HQ located in Dubai. The region is of great strategic significance for Bayer and, within the last decade, we have introduced various innovative products that address the unmet medical needs of the Middle East.

From a business standpoint, across the region, we are committed to taking our Consumer Health division to record-high sales, powered by demand particularly in the UAE, Saudi Arabia and Egypt.

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Can you share with us some of the trends, opportunities and challenges awaiting in this region and what is your strategy face them?

It is a very dynamic and diverse region, which is reflected in the brand performance in different countries. Digitization will be critical to our continued success in the region, especially to engage the consumer and to implement education and awareness campaigns. On the retail side, online pharmacies are growing in a big way in the region taking our products to a wider demographic. In fact, the Middle East is one of the fastest-growing OTC markets with more than €2 billion, right after Latin America. Independent reports and primary market research data about our customers' needs and perceptions indicate that we have the potential to outgrow the market.

To some extent, consumer behaviour is similar across the region and we are looking to establish a common model that can be successful in the majority of them. There are several difficulties in the Middle East, but it will definitively remain a priority destination to multinational companies.

Bayer is one of the top ten multinationals in the Middle East and we expect continuous growth thanks to the pharmaceutical revolution in the region. While the International Monetary Fund (IMF) has recently downgraded its outlook for the world economy, it has raised growth forecasts for Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states. For example, in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, one of the region's most promising markets, we are currently supporting governmental initiatives by providing a talent base comprising of both nationals and a skilled ex-pat workforce. On the other side, Egypt outlook looks very promising as the economy has made good progress so far in the 2019 fiscal year, which began in July. Economic growth is expected to remain robust because of the increased government investment spending, an improved regulatory environment, a weaker pound and construction activity related to the building of the new capital city.

How is your portfolio adapting to meet the needs of the region?

We have our skin care, hair loss, gastrointestinal and cardio protection products, among others. We are focusing on promoting awareness and prevention against major health challenges with the objective of relieving the burden on the health institutions. Through those dynamics, the consumer

will be less exposed to diseases and will not be using the healthcare services so often. We are talking about potentially saving significant amounts for the stakeholders. Moving towards wellness has to be a priority to the consumer health industry. Bayer, being one of the largest players in the global consumer health market, has been pushing to establish self-care awareness with consumers.

Are there any particular initiatives that you want to mention in this regard?

We have identified different lifestyle-impacting categories that need to be explored. For example, Bayer recently partner with several schools in order to educate children about allergies, which is an important topic as the prevalence of allergic rhinitis in school children in some parts of the UAE is as high as 36 percent. Similarly, in the cardiovascular arena, we have Aspirin for cardio protection, which is the number one product worldwide. The objective is also to increase awareness among the consumers about the product's ability to lower the risk of heart attack through interfering with the blood's clotting action.

How are the consumers reacting to those awareness campaigns?

In the beginning, approaching and engaging the consumers was a challenge, but we saw a high level of response because they began to understand that Bayer looks beyond just commercial opportunities and really cares about them. We have engaged the health authorities and professionals for the campaigns. Our approach has gone beyond promoting products; we also look to educate on indication and the overall value for society.

Are there any upcoming product launches that you wish to bring to the region in particular?

We are tackling the neonatal area concerning mothers before, during and after pregnancy because the Middle East has one of the highest birthrates in the world. One of our product helps provide both mother and baby with nutritional support to help in babies' healthy development. It contains a range of vitamins and minerals, including the highest level of folic acid and iron of any pregnancy multivitamin and a high level of iodine for brain development. This reduces the neonatal brain abnormalities by 90 percent.

Can you discuss how Bayer Middle East is using digital technologies to better serve its patients and the region?

As a company, we are fully aware of the transformation capabilities of new technology. For example, we recently announced a new collaboration with the Dubai Health Authority (DHA) to launch AI-powered health pods for full-body check-ups across government authorities in Dubai. It is a joint effort to empower citizens and residents by providing accessible solutions to take control of their own health and support their journey for better lifestyle, wellness and nutrition plans. In the future, we will continue to support public health prevention programs that educate consumers and helps them manage their own health, as part of our commitment to being part of a healthier social fabric across the whole region.

As part of that effort, and showing the company's commitment to the region, we recently hosted Eugene Borukhovich, Global Head of Digital Health at Bayer, who participated in a session titled "Pharma Digital Transformation: Changing the Experience of Health", in which he talked about key trends impacting the healthcare industry, the importance of emerging technologies such as AI and machine learning in enhancing healthcare solutions and start-up-driven healthcare transformation.

Moreover, Saskia Steinacker, Global Head of Digital Transformation at Bayer, explained the company's initiatives to digitize processes within healthcare and agriculture during her participation at the recent AI Everything Summit. Our digitalization efforts have the purpose of engaging the consumer in a friendly manner.

How do you assess the position of the UAE to become a global pharma hub?

The facilities offered by the government like the free zones and tax incentives have gotten the attention of multinational companies. The UAE is taking an innovative approach to address 21st-century challenges. The country's National Innovation Strategy, announced in 2014, encourages new thinking and groundbreaking solutions in seven priority sectors: renewable and clean energy, transportation, technology, education, health, water and space. At Bayer, we see high potential in this thriving market, therefore, we are currently assessing different options to engage at the forefront within this highly emerging environment, particularly in the field of Digital Health.

How do you manage to attract top talent in this competitive environment?

Bayer pursues a sustainable human resources policy. The objectives and principles are based on our corporate values, known by the acronym LIFE, which are valid throughout the world. LIFE stands for Leadership, Integrity, Flexibility and Efficiency. These values encapsulate the core elements of our corporate culture, which combines a strong focus on performance and development with a high degree of social responsibility. At the same time, they are a simple and practical guide for employees in their work. Furthermore, Bayer is one of the fastest-growing companies and is recognized as such. In terms of talent, they want to know how the company is performing to understand if they want to work here. During the past 15 years, Bayer has positioned itself as a great place to work and grow. Our great capabilities attract gifted people. We have been developing Middle Eastern talent, which is increasingly being taken to affiliates all over the globe. In consumer health, we are transforming into a Fast-Moving Consumer Goods (FMCG) and for the first time, we have begun looking for people in that context. A new era is approaching and the industry is seeing many FMCG giants like P&G and Unilever penetrating the consumer health market. The self-care industry is still in its early stages and Bayer will continue to be the preferred employee in the segment.

What is the image and the reputation would you like Bayer to have in the Middle East?

Bayer is well known as a synonym for quality. It has made our work easier because it comes with a high degree of credibility in the eyes of all the different stakeholders. Expectations are always high, which is why the company is investing billions to develop new molecules, medical solutions and agricultural solutions. I am proud of belonging to the organization. Our mission statement is “Science for a better life” and it is not an empty phrase, it is what motivates us. Bayer is a unique organization because we are both on the healthcare and agricultural industries. We are about advancing health and nutrition to help society thrive.

What motivates you to continue with Bayer after 16 years?

Bayer has allowed me to grow with different responsibilities. I have worked almost everywhere in the Middle East, which has given me a diversified experience. Being able to have such a great impact on the consumer health industry is a privilege to me. I have a high level of satisfaction and I know that there are still many things to be done for my family, teams and career. I have the feeling that I am part of the group of people that have developed the industry in the Middle East, which is very rewarding. My final message is that the people development and consumer awareness

development are key for us as a company. When I hire new people, I always ask myself if they can one day replace me in the position; if the answer is yes, I do not think twice. At Bayer, we always strive to have the best people and developing talent is one of the reasons I am passionate about this role.

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