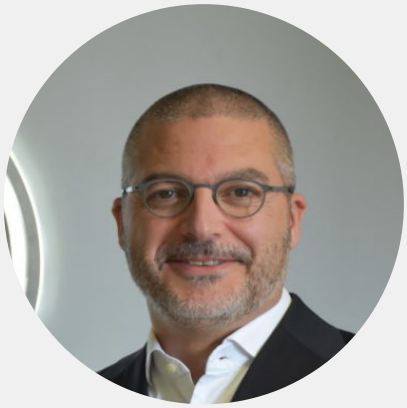
Nael Dabbagh – General Manager MENEAT, GE Healthcare



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Over a decade ago, GE Healthcare selected Turkey as an international operational base for its Eastern and Africa Growth Markets (EAGM) and 84 countries are managed from Turkey today. Nael Dabbagh, general manager for the Middle East, Northeast Africa, Turkey, and Central Asia (MENEAT) region, comments on the global firm's healthcare transformation, how their use of AI is making systems more efficient, and the investment projects that have positioned GE as a key partner for governments looking to improve their capabilities.

Can you begin by introducing GE Healthcare's significant transformation after spinning off Cytiva and its leaner operational approach within the context of an industry that is also undergoing a realignment?

GE Healthcare is not a technology provider but rather a solutions provider. In general, the company has become more agile, becoming leaner for the better.

The healthcare industry has been undergoing a transformation in the last few years. The industry, and we as a part of it, must develop new tools and adapt to the changes occurring in the public sector, including the shifting role of regulators and the privatization of a significant segment of the industry.

I’ll give you an example when it comes to the privatization trend we’re seeing. Traditionally, Ministries of Health bought large quantities of equipment, looking for the best technology at the best price. Dealing with a multitude of private providers rather than a single government entity requires quick decision-making, close to where the action is.

With experience and operations in more than 160 countries, we know that delivering on the critical projects of which we are a part requires us to be quick when it comes to decision-making. Our process is fast because we are provided with access to senior leadership. Particularly in this part of the world, where risk management is one of the most important priorities, being lean is an absolute necessity.

Many of your counterparts at other leading multinational medtechs launched their careers with GE. What does the company excel at that makes it a talent springboard?

The success of GE Healthcare is due to its achievements in the first part of any company’s journey: hiring talent. We are only as good as our people, so having the right scientists, engineers, finance specialists, and commercial teams gives us an advantage. Of course, having the best talent is not enough. You also need to develop them and provide them with growth opportunities both personally and professionally. We train people very well. Crotonville, the first Corporate University, is a purpose-built GE training facility where employees, partners, and customers experience incredible growth and training courses. Development has always been key to our success.

Another aspect of our approach is putting people in challenging jobs because that is where they learn the most. One advantage GE has as a high-tech industrial is that people can work across different geographies and industries, gaining experience that would otherwise come from careers at multiple companies.

What is the remit of your current role and how do you reconcile the big differences amongst the markets you manage?

MENEAT is composed of 22 countries in the Middle East, Northeast Africa, Turkey and part of Central Asia. It is a very interesting region because of its diversity. We have high GDP countries with small populations like Qatar and the UAE, alongside huge countries like Pakistan and Egypt that have hundreds of millions of people. The maturity of the healthcare systems is quite uneven; there are mature systems like Saudi, Turkey or Egypt, and many other countries that have bigger

needs and opportunities when it comes to healthcare accessibility, such as Yemen and Libya.

Being one of the world's largest industrial companies, how do you see GE Healthcare adding value to the region beyond services and equipment provision?

I am proud to work at GE because, as a company of impact, we have the resources – whether in terms of knowledge, finances, or solutions – to make a big difference to the communities in which we operate.

In Saudi Arabia for example, we have been working with the Ministry of Health to support the country's Vision 2030, helping them to become more efficient, decrease costs, and improve quality of care. In the UAE, our partners are running a public-private partnership (PPP) program for five years where many of the country's radiology operations have been connected with each other and with counterparts abroad – in total, 16 hospitals and ~60 primary care centres now form a network offering better capabilities.

In Turkey, we have played a major role through PPPs, sharing equity in some construction projects, and doing managed equipment services. GE Healthcare was almost the primary supplier for radiology, oncology, and medical devices for Ankara Bilkent City Hospital, one of the largest hospitals in the world, with over 3,800 beds and an investment of US 1.1 billion.

In Egypt, we just signed a preliminary agreement leveraging Gustave Roussy's One Stop Breast Cancer diagnostics program to increase the speed and the accuracy of breast cancer diagnosis in Egypt. The objective is to ascertain a diagnosis in a single day, furthering the country's goal of screening 30 million women across the country.

Given GE Healthcare's PPP journey in Turkey, how do you evaluate the country's progress towards a better healthcare system? What is the current status of the market?

Turkey's healthcare sector has undergone a massive transformation over the last 20 years. The country has great doctors, medical schools, and key opinion leaders, some of whom are globally renowned and members of the biggest professional societies in the world. With the right infrastructure and education in place, Turkey has provided its population with an impressive level of access to healthcare.

The Turkish authorities have chosen, in many cases, a PPP model where private investors come in and run the hospitals. The entire clinical piece remained with the Ministry of Health, but the rest of the operations were outsourced. The results of these partnerships have benefited the population, providing them with a high-quality healthcare system.

From a business perspective, how important is the Turkish market for GE Healthcare within the region and what is its strategic role?

Turkey is an incredibly strategic market for us. As of today, around five PPP projects are ongoing, comprising 10,000 hospital beds. Even as strategies, stakeholders, and models shift, we look forward to continuing to support these important initiatives.

Turkey is also critical for the region. Many of Turkey's big engineering, procurement, and construction (EPC) companies have learned how to build massive hospitals in a short span of time – in some cases 36 months – including the financing, design, and execution. This knowledge is being shared across the region and these companies are now working in regions like Central Asia and Africa to implement projects as demand for better healthcare continues to grow.

From an economic perspective, these big projects are adding significant value to the country. Besides leaving world-class healthcare infrastructure in place and boosting the construction sector, the PPPs have benefited Turkey by increasing health tourism from all over the world, which translates into foreign currency entering the country. In short, Turkey has become a regional healthcare hub, and we are partners in that endeavour.

How does your recently announced partnership with Istanbul-based CUREA to work on AI-based applications focused on COVID-19 and breast cancer fit into that scheme?

That partnership is part of our work on breast cancer with Professor Hakki Muammer Karakas, who is the Coordinator for the Istanbul Provincial Health Directorate Radiology Services and a faculty member of Turkey's University of Health Sciences. The Curea team under Prof Karakaş' leadership is using GE's Edison Health Services to build an AI application to detect malignant and non-malignant lesions on CESM images.

Turkey is an ideal place to build AI applications for many reasons. First, there is a wealth of the data: 0.1 percent of all medical images generated globally come from Istanbul and the country

generates 50 percent more images per machine than any other country.

Second, Turkey has some of the best doctors who are important members of respected clinical societies across the world and working on scientific projects to shape the future of clinical care.

And third, there are many data scientists, mathematicians, start-ups and health-tech companies based in Turkey who are gathered under innovation and entrepreneur organizations such as technoparks, accelerators, NGOs and supported by corporate investors, angel networks and the government.

For these reasons, GE has in Istanbul a technology centre where approximately 450 software engineers work to solve challenges and implement solutions in the aviation and healthcare industries.

Since only between three and five percent of health data generated globally is currently being used, how can stakeholders leverage GE Healthcare's Edison, your AI-powered platform, to achieve better outcomes?

An average hospital generates 50 petabytes of information every year [1 petabyte = approximately 1 million gigabytes]. Information is everywhere – it comes from devices, images, electronic health records, financial data, operational data and more. However, much of it is unused because it is sitting on different devices and servers.

Converging all that information into a single platform is a necessary step if we want to make precision health a reality. That is what our Edison platform is trying to do – to utilize data to improve every step of the health journey, from diagnosis to treatment.

For example, an average MRI scan can take between 30-40 minutes. However, using AI, our engineers can deploy an application based on deep learning to reduce that time to 15 minutes with equal or better quality. The solution increases the number of patients that can be diagnosed and provides a better journey for each one of them. Another interesting example is related to the fact that 60 percent of all images generated in hospitals are x-rays, which makes analyzing all of them in time a real challenge. Fortunately, we can use AI technology to flag serious issues and prioritize the ones that require the most urgent attention from doctors.

How is GE Healthcare approaching the increased concern about data security and patient privacy from governments?

GE Healthcare is committed to helping solve the security challenges faced by health data collection, storage, and analysis. We frequently read about the threat of hacks of all kinds of information, but for health data, security is of particular importance because of its incredibly personal and sensitive nature. We are there to support our customers, many of whom believe in keeping data on their premises.

When it comes to digital, we have a lot of experience, but we also continue learning every day and solve problems in real-time. Our job is to support our partners in their digital journey through the technology we provide. GE Healthcare is in a unique position to help Turkey and other countries achieve better patient outcomes and levels of efficiency but it cannot do it alone. We need collaboration with IT companies and governments and need support with a clear regulatory environment when it comes to cybersecurity.

Can you comment on the organization’s performance in 2020, the year of the COVID-19 pandemic, and your expectations for 2021?

In 2020, the healthcare industry was put at the centre of the world’s focus and economy. GE Healthcare has one of the widest ranges of products and services, so throughout the last two years, we have been able to continue helping and delivering. We produced solutions such as the CT in a Box, which allowed for screening of pneumonia related to COVID-19 in temporary facilities away from the main hospital buildings to decrease the risk of contamination. We also ramped up the production of ventilators which were critical in the fight to save lives. It was definitely one of the most challenging years for our company as a whole, but the future looks brighter. COVID-19 brought to the forefront that ageing healthcare infrastructure must be addressed and that digital solutions can be leveraged to improve access and quality of healthcare. These are lasting, positive legacies.

At a moment when localization of manufacturing has risen as a focal point for governments that worry about supply chain disruption in emergency situations, and some in your region that would appreciate the investment and employment it might bring, is that something that GE is considering?

We produce high-technology solutions that require very specific manufacturing practices. Localization is a critical priority for many governments around the world, but no company can have a plant everywhere. We are focused on creating an efficient supply chain that makes our products and services cost-competitive.

After so many years of experience with the Turkish market, what would be your advice to foreign colleagues when it comes to navigating the market and the country's solid infrastructure, large population, and economic challenges?

It is important to focus on the long-term. After many years working in the Turkish market, I can confirm that it is possible to have a successful business here. My first interaction with the market was in 2000, one year before a currency devaluation of 80 percent. The Turkish people are extremely resilient, which you can see from the overall trend of development and growth over the last several decades. Managing short cycles alongside long-term vision is key to seize opportunities.

Is there a final message you would like to convey to our audience?

With precision medicine and AI becoming a reality, the opportunities are endless. We will be able to succeed and leverage them for better health for all through the power of collaboration and partnership.

I feel privileged to be part of such an impactful sector. The COVID-19 pandemic has helped people realize the value of what healthcare can do. As a former back-office employee working in finance, I didn't always see the big picture. Now, I'm able to, and I can only say that we must all remember what a critical field we are supporting.

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