

# Khalil Jamaledine Vice President Middle East, Medtronic

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It's a rare privilege to build a career that not only sustains you but also improves lives.

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*At the helm of Medtronic's operations in the Middle East, Khalil Jamaledine brings over three decades of experience to a region undergoing profound healthcare transformation. From building the company's early presence in a small Beirut office to leading its strategic consolidation across Saudi Arabia and beyond, his journey mirrors Medtronic's evolution into a key player in the Kingdom's Vision 2030. In this wide-ranging conversation, he shares insights on advancing access, shaping digital innovation, developing local talent, and redefining value in healthcare.*

**What has been the trajectory of your career at Medtronic, and how has the company established and expanded its strategic footprint in Saudi Arabia and the wider Middle East region?**

I currently serve as Vice President for Medtronic in the Middle East, a role based in Riyadh and encompassing the Gulf Cooperation Council countries, the Arabian Peninsula, and the Levant—specifically Cyprus, Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, and Iraq. While our Saudi operations are fully direct and onshore, we continue to operate through strategic channel partners across the rest of the region. My journey with Medtronic began in 1995, at a time when the company had only a nascent presence in the Middle East. We operated from a small office in Beirut with just five employees, and Medtronic itself was still a relatively modest organization focused exclusively on cardiac therapies—namely pacemakers, heart valves, and catheters. I started in product management, concentrating on cardiac arrhythmias, where we addressed both slow rhythms with pacemakers and fast rhythms with defibrillators. This field shaped nearly half of my career, and in time, I moved to Switzerland to lead this therapeutic area across a broad set of emerging markets, including the Middle East, India, and Latin America.

The company's growth over the years has been both remarkable and transformative. Through sustained innovation and a series of strategic acquisitions, Medtronic expanded beyond cardiology to become a diversified global leader in medical technology. Our portfolio came to include therapies for the brain, spine, and diabetes, and the landmark acquisition of Covidien in 2015 enabled our

entry into the surgical space, from general to minimally invasive procedures. This evolution brought not only an increase in therapeutic breadth, but also greater complexity in how we delivered care across varied geographies and health systems.

As the company scaled, so too did our distribution networks and partnerships across the region. In 2013, we identified Saudi Arabia as a market of critical strategic importance. Despite a relatively low level of therapy penetration, the Kingdom stood out for its unique combination of strong government commitment to healthcare and a fully state-funded system that provides high-quality treatment free of charge to all citizens. Unlike many Western nations where public healthcare is tax-funded, Saudi Arabia's model is built on direct state provision—an exceptional foundation that underscored the country's long-term vision for health system transformation.

At that point, our operations in the Kingdom were fragmented, and it was evident that a consolidated structure would be essential to maximize the impact of our growing portfolio. I relocated to Jeddah—home to the headquarters of our principal distribution partners—to lead this transition. Given that full foreign ownership was not permitted at the time, we established a joint venture with one of our largest partners, Gulf Medical Company, and in 2015, Medtronic Saudi Arabia was officially formed. While the venture structure remains, Medtronic oversees the day-to-day operations and strategic direction of the business.

From that foundation, we unified all our business units under a single roof, allowing us to realize operational efficiencies, leverage economies of scale, and enhance the value we deliver to the healthcare system. By 2018—well ahead of the formal Regional Headquarters policy—we had already transformed our Saudi presence into the regional headquarters for the Gulf. A year ago, we extended this role to cover the entire Middle East, marking another milestone in our regional consolidation strategy.

Today, we have grown from fewer than 70 employees in 2015 to over 400 in Saudi Arabia, with an additional 30 professionals spread across the wider region. We have also placed significant emphasis on talent localization, achieving over 70 percent Saudization. One of our flagship initiatives has been the Saudi Young Talent Program, through which we recruit recent graduates, offer them structured internships, and retain the most promising individuals for long-term roles. This program has become a cornerstone of our talent strategy, enabling us to cultivate a new generation of professionals deeply aligned with Medtronic's mission and values.

Reflecting on our journey, I am proud not only of the scale and maturity of our presence in the Kingdom, but also of the role we have played in advancing healthcare access, developing local capabilities, and supporting the broader transformation of Saudi Arabia's health sector as part of Vision 2030. The Kingdom has become not just a key market, but a central hub for Medtronic in the region—one that continues to inspire bold thinking and long-term commitment.

### **What healthcare trends are driving Medtronic's strategy in Saudi Arabia, and why does the Kingdom remain a market of such strategic relevance?**

A defining feature of Saudi Arabia's healthcare landscape is the underutilization of key medical therapies, particularly in areas where Medtronic offers solutions. When comparing pacemaker adoption rates per capita for example to countries such as France or Belgium, it becomes evident that a considerable number of patients in Saudi Arabia are not receiving the treatment they need. The issue is not a lack of resources, but rather a gap in access.

The foundational elements are firmly established. Healthcare is fully funded by the government, the infrastructure is modern and world-class, and the country has made exceptional investments in human capital—sending tens of thousands of students abroad annually, many of whom return as highly qualified physicians. Saudi Arabia is not facing a shortage of talent or facilities; it is facing the challenge of connecting patients to the care they are entitled to receive.

Access is especially complex given the Kingdom's vast geography, which is comparable in scale to Western Europe. Patients living in remote or peripheral regions often struggle to get referred to major hospitals in cities like Riyadh or Jeddah where tertiary care is available. The priority, therefore, is not only to centralize excellence, but to extend reach—ensuring that therapies can be delivered closer to the patient, rather than requiring the patient to travel. The Ministry of Health effort to reorganize around more than 20 clusters around the Kingdom is addressing that issue.

Medtronic has also been deeply engaged in addressing this challenge. While many players in the sector continue to rely on third-party distributors and focus on three major metropolitan centers, we were the first to establish a direct presence across the Kingdom. Today, our teams are active not only in Riyadh, Jeddah, and Dammam, but also in regions such as Al-Qassim, Hail, Jizan, Najran and across the north and south of the country. This decentralized footprint has enabled us to identify underserved areas, train local physicians, support referral pathways, and improve therapeutic reach.

Through close collaboration with the Ministry of Health and other stakeholders, we continue to expand access to care and bring transformative therapies to patients across the country. Our approach aligns with Saudi Arabia's national healthcare priorities and is firmly rooted in Medtronic's broader mission to alleviate pain, restore health, and extend life—wherever the patient may be.

### **What areas of Medtronic's portfolio are delivering the greatest value in KSA, and how is the company ensuring the successful integration of its latest medical technologies?**

Medtronic's diverse portfolio addresses multiple areas of critical need in Saudi Arabia, with diabetes and cardiovascular care standing out as the most pressing. The Kingdom continues to report one of the highest diabetes prevalence rates globally, making it a clear strategic priority. In response, we have scaled the deployment of insulin pumps nationwide, extending well beyond the major cities to ensure access across the Kingdom. These pumps feature Arabic-language interfaces for ease of use, and their adoption is supported by extensive education and training efforts targeting both patients and healthcare professionals.

Our collaboration with the Ministry of Health on diabetes initiatives is fully aligned with the national Vision 2030 agenda, particularly the goals of improving patient outcomes while delivering system-wide efficiencies. A notable example is the diabetes clinic we helped establish in Al-Ahsa, which offers an integrated care model covering early diagnosis, therapy initiation, and long-term follow-up. Much of this follow-up is digitized, allowing physicians to monitor patients remotely and intervene when necessary. This model not only streamlines the care pathway but also enhances the patient experience and clinical performance.

In cardiovascular health—another area of significant national burden—our recent introduction of the Harmony<sup>®</sup> Transcatheter Pulmonary Valve represents a major advancement. While transcatheter therapies have long existed for aortic valve disease, Harmony is the first of its kind designed specifically for the pulmonary outflow tract. It offers a minimally invasive alternative for patients, many of them children or those with congenital conditions, who were previously unsuitable for open-heart surgery. The ability to treat this population non-surgically represents a significant step

forward in addressing a long-standing therapeutic gap.

To ensure that such innovations translate into real clinical impact, Medtronic operates one of the region's most robust medical education platforms. We train more than 2,000 healthcare professionals annually through a combination of in-country workshops, international training programs, and hands-on clinical simulations. In highly specialized fields such as spine or orthopedics, we offer cadaver-based training to replicate live surgical conditions and build practitioner confidence. These efforts are essential to ensuring that innovation is not only introduced, but also responsibly and sustainably integrated into local care pathways.

### **How is Medtronic contributing to Saudi Arabia's healthcare transformation under Vision 2030, particularly through localized manufacturing, regionalization, and value-based care initiatives?**

Saudi Arabia's healthcare reform is now firmly in its execution phase, with regional clusters taking on increasing responsibility for managing care delivery, budgets, and outcomes. While procurement remains centralized through NUPCO, the Kingdom's Group Purchasing Organization, these clusters are gradually assuming greater autonomy, signaling a system-wide shift toward localized accountability and performance measurement.

This transformation reflects a broader move from fully state-funded care with little cost or outcome tracking toward a value-based model in which both clinical and economic impact are assessed. In the past, the government shouldered the cost of treatment without mechanisms to evaluate efficacy or efficiency. Today, clusters can measure the real cost of care and its outcomes, allowing the system to focus on optimizing both.

Medtronic has aligned closely with these priorities, evolving from a technology provider to a long-term strategic partner. Our collaboration with the Eastern Cluster to establish a fully integrated diabetes clinic in Al-Ahsa demonstrates this shift. Covering the full continuum from diagnosis to digital follow-up, the model delivers measurable improvements in outcomes and efficiency. We are now working to replicate this approach across other clusters.

In parallel, we have advanced our commitment to localization. In partnership with a local Saudi company, Medtronic produced the Kingdom's first ICU and portable ventilators—a milestone in domestic medical device manufacturing capability. This initiative led to an agreement to manufacture up to 1,200 medical devices annually, achieving a 46 percent localization rate within two years. As the first multinational medtech company to lead such an effort in Saudi Arabia, we view this not only as a strategic achievement but as a foundation for expanding localized manufacturing across additional product lines. Meanwhile, the Kingdom is preparing to implement a national insurance-based reimbursement model under the NHI authority. Though healthcare will remain free for citizens, the system will now track service utilization and outcomes at the individual level. This raises expectations for all stakeholders: innovation must deliver not just clinical benefit, but proven value.

In response, we are working closely with providers and payers to ensure optimal use of our therapies, robust clinical training, and demonstrable impact. As Saudi Arabia builds a data-driven, outcome-focused system, Medtronic remains committed to supporting this transformation through solutions that are not only advanced but also aligned with the principles of long-term sustainability.

## **How is Medtronic supporting Saudi Arabia's digital health transformation, and in what ways are you leveraging remote technologies and clinical data to enhance care delivery and generate real-world evidence?**

Saudi Arabia's healthcare sector is undergoing an accelerated digital transformation, and Medtronic is playing an active role in enabling this shift through both technological innovation and intelligent use of clinical data. Many of our therapies—particularly in cardiology and diabetes—are in fact implantable microcomputers that collect extensive physiological data. Today, this information is no longer simply stored; it is being mined in real time, in close collaboration with healthcare professionals, to adjust therapies, personalize care, and improve patient outcomes.

One of the most significant advancements lies in how we are expanding technical support capabilities across the Kingdom. Medtronic therapies often require the presence of a technical specialist during complex procedures, such as pacemaker or transcatheter valve implantation. Given the Kingdom's vast geography, deploying personnel to every site is not scalable. To overcome this, we are investing over USD 1 million in advanced remote-support technology—including smart goggles and high-resolution camera systems—which allows our experts in Riyadh to guide procedures being performed in remote hospitals. This approach reduces logistical constraints, increases operational efficiency, and ensures that patients benefit from expert input regardless of location.

A notable example of this model in action is our collaboration with the Seha Virtual Hospital, where we successfully piloted remote support for Transcatheter Aortic Valve Implantation procedures. Following this success, we are scaling the approach nationally, helping to expand access to advanced therapies through digital connectivity.

Concurrently, we are investing in local data infrastructure to support Saudi Arabia's data localization requirements. In partnership with the Saudi Data and Artificial Intelligence Authority, we are establishing a dedicated local data center to enable secure storage and analysis of patient data, while also supporting remote monitoring programs across multiple therapeutic areas. These platforms allow clinicians to follow patient progress in real time and intervene proactively when needed.

Importantly, the quality and reliability of clinical data generated in Saudi Arabia is increasingly recognized at a global level. Several of our local studies now contribute to regulatory submissions abroad, including approvals by the US FDA. This not only highlights the scientific maturity of the Kingdom's healthcare ecosystem but also reinforces its role as a strategic innovation hub within Medtronic's global network.

## **How is Medtronic approaching talent attraction, development, and retention in Saudi Arabia amid increasing regional competition and accelerated market growth?**

Medtronic's journey in Saudi Arabia has been deeply shaped by its people. Our early decision to establish a direct presence in the Kingdom gave us a distinct advantage—not as a first mover with a unique market access but also in attracting skilled professionals, at a time when few global medtech companies operated locally. As we transitioned away from distributor-led models and consolidated operations under the Medtronic umbrella, we absorbed a significant portion of the existing talent in the market. This initial team, largely composed of experienced non-Saudi professionals, provided valuable market knowledge and clinical expertise during our foundational years.

From the outset, however, we understood that sustainable growth would require investment in local talent. Given the limited number of Saudi nationals with medtech experience at the time, we focused on developing our own pipeline. The launch of the Medtronic Young Talent Program was a cornerstone of this strategy, allowing us to recruit promising university graduates, train them internally, and integrate them into key areas of the business. Many of these early recruits have since advanced into leadership roles, a reflection of both their capabilities and the accelerated growth of the organization. In recent years, the talent landscape has evolved significantly. The introduction of Saudi Arabia's Regional Headquarters (RHQ) mandate has drawn many multinationals into the local market, intensifying competition for top professionals. As a result, Medtronic talent has become a natural target for recruitment, and while some turnover is inevitable, we continue to be recognized as one of the most attractive employers in the sector, with Medtronic Saudi Arabia winning the prestigious Labor Award for Saudization in 2024.

Our ability to retain talent lies not only in offering competitive compensation and comprehensive benefits—such as global stock programs and mobility opportunities—but also in the strength of our mission and the clarity of our growth trajectory. Employees are not limited to local roles; they are part of a broader ecosystem that offers professional development across geographies and functions. Ultimately, we are committed to building careers, not simply filling positions. By fostering a culture of purpose, investing in local capability, and offering meaningful growth, we continue to position Medtronic as a magnet for Saudi talent and a leading player in the region's evolving healthcare ecosystem.

**With over three decades at Medtronic, how do you reflect on your legacy, and what ambitions continue to guide your leadership across the Middle East healthcare landscape?**

Spending over three decades with Medtronic has been a profound journey—personally meaningful and professionally transformative. What has made it so rewarding is the rare convergence of purpose and profession: the ability to build a fulfilling career while contributing to something larger than oneself. I often remind my team how fortunate we are to work for a company where our daily efforts translate into real, measurable improvements in people's lives. That is what continues to motivate me every day.

While I've held several roles throughout my time at Medtronic, the one I currently hold—leading the company's entire portfolio across the Middle East—is the role I feel most proud of. It offers the unique opportunity to step beyond individual therapy areas and to shape integrated, system-level solutions. This breadth allows us not only to improve clinical outcomes but also to support more sustainable models of care, working in close partnership with governments and health systems to address challenges in access, cost, and quality simultaneously.

Despite the progress we've made, the work is far from complete. Many patients across the region still lack access to the care they need, and health systems continue to face mounting pressures. What inspires me is knowing that Medtronic is uniquely positioned to respond—bringing not just technologies, but scalable, outcome-oriented solutions that support transformation at every level.

If there is a legacy I hope to leave, it would be one rooted in meaningful impact—building something that lasts, not only within the company but within the healthcare systems we've worked so closely with. I would like to be remembered not just for helping Medtronic grow, but for helping our partners deliver better care, more efficiently, to more people.

At the core of all this is Medtronic's mission: to alleviate pain, restore health, and extend life. That mission has never been a slogan—it has always been the lens through which we operate, the

standard we hold ourselves to, and the reason so many of us remain deeply committed to this work. It's what continues to make the journey so purposeful and why I look forward to what still lies ahead.

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