Joe Henein, CEO of NewBridge Pharmaceuticals, on Transforming Healthcare in MENA

Fortune Arabia conducted an exclusive interview with Joe Henein, the CEO and President of NewBridge Pharmaceuticals. Joe Henein has over 35 years of experience in the pharmaceutical industry across the US, Europe, and the Middle East. He has assumed senior executive leadership roles in various notable pharmaceutical companies. He also served as the chair of the PhRMA MEAC Ethics Review Board. Joe Henein is dedicated to introducing innovative therapeutics to the Middle East and North Africa.

1. **NewBridge has delivered some of the world's most revolutionary offerings, such as Oncotype DX. What are NewBridge's biggest achievements as per you?**

Our biggest achievement is developing innovative and life-changing medical treatments and witnessing their remarkable capacity to positively transform the lives of people afflicted with severe and chronic diseases.

Our mission is to facilitate access to innovation, empower healthcare professionals with cutting-edge treatment options, and, in turn, improve the quality of life of patients by alleviating their pain and suffering.

Our name, NewBridge, is a testament to our mission. "New" stands for innovation and our expertise in partnering with global biopharmaceutical companies. "Bridge" symbolizes our dedication to creating a platform and capabilities that bridge the access gap and deliver new innovative therapeutics to address unmet medical needs in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA).

We are the one-stop solution for numerous biopharmaceutical companies looking to expand their footprint in MENA. We provide the latest treatment modalities to physicians and make specialty therapeutic innovations accessible to the masses.

2. **NewBridge's business model is a benchmark in MENA. What are its key strengths?**

NewBridge's key strengths are delivering consistent performance and demonstrating the ability to build brands for global biopharmaceutical companies in MENA. We have tremendous in-house infrastructure and capabilities to provide end-to-end pharmaceutical services to our global partners.

Our unique proposition lies in offering unparalleled scalability to pharmaceutical enterprises seeking to capitalize on new growth opportunities within the region. We are the only regional partner facilitating services in over 14 countries in MENA.

Our diverse and globally sourced team is our other key strength. Our team comprises of the best talents from various multinational companies based in different regions, thus contributing a wealth of expertise and experience to our operations. Moreover, our leadership team is distinguished by its extensive regional and industry experience, further enhancing our capabilities to achieve success.

3. **NewBridge Pharmaceuticals won the Most Innovative Pharmaceutics Commercialization Partner MENA award. What are some groundbreaking innovations that you foresee in the pharma industry? What role will artificial intelligence play?**

We foresee several groundbreaking and promising innovations that will address serious and challenging diseases. We are working to bring revolutionary innovations in the field of large protein-based molecules, biotechnology, rare disease therapies, personalized and gene therapy, targeted oncology therapies, and vaccines to the region.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) will be crucial in drug discovery and development. AI will support the decision-making processes for existing drugs and expanded treatments for other conditions, as well as expediting the clinical trial processes by identifying the right patients from several data sources. AI will directly benefit patients by helping them learn more about their conditions and make decisions about their diagnosis and treatment.

4. **What are some market gaps and unmet needs NewBridge is working on?**

The biggest market gap we are bridging is facilitating previously inaccessible treatments to over 400 million people in MENA. We act as a one-stop solution through our meticulously developed professional platform that allows innovative companies to partner with us to ensure their treatments and medicines reach millions of people in the region.

Notably, rare disease incidences in the region surpass global averages. We work closely with small, medium, and large biopharmaceutical companies to offer top-of-the-class treatments that cure rare diseases.

5. **What are the biggest geographical, geopolitical, and economic challenges you face? How do you overcome them?**

We face some tough geographical, geopolitical, and economic challenges. Geographically, MENA is a large and diverse region with highly fragmented healthcare systems. We have to devise unique strategies for different regions. Despite the immense geographical challenges, we ensure that all our meticulously designed strategies match our global strategy.

Geopolitical instability in the region is another massive challenge. We must mitigate the risks of serving geopolitically unstable countries by expediting business in stable countries. Varying payment cycles from country to country also pose a significant challenge. We have aligned our payment cycles to the payment cycles of the region.

6. **NewBridge has teams in MENA, EU, and the US constantly seeking innovation and disruptive technologies. How do you attract top global pharma talents? What is the company doing well in terms of employees?**

We have a well-defined hiring process that ensures that we hire the best talents for key roles. We focus on effective integration and retention. Our inclusive and transparent work culture encourages focused and purposeful excellence. We encourage entrepreneurial skills to help our team members grow professionally and personally.

7. **Where do you see NewBridge Pharmaceuticals in 10 years?**

NewBridge Pharmaceuticals will continue to be the conduit of groundbreaking new therapies and focus on meeting some of the unmet medical needs of the region. We are looking to expand into new genomics technologies and treatment modalities like Crisper technologies, Gene therapy, etc.

We may also be expanding geographically and discussing possible moves into South Africa and selected Sub-Saharan African countries. I also see a major trend that the business model of NewBridge, as a one-stop solution partner for an entire region, will become the norm within the global emerging markets space.