

Mayada Al-Ahmad - General Manager GCC, BMS



Meaningful healthcare transformation must always start and end with the patient

25.06.2026

Tags: [GCC](#), [MEA](#), [BMS](#), [UAE](#), [Rare Diseases](#), [Access](#), [Strategy](#), [Cell & Gene Therapy](#)

Healthcare transformation across the GCC is entering a new phase, driven by major investments in precision medicine, genomics, and healthcare system modernisation, with countries such as Saudi Arabia and the UAE positioning themselves at the forefront of global healthcare innovation. Against this backdrop, Bristol Myers Squibb is expanding its role in the region beyond medicines alone, focusing on ecosystem partnerships, clinical research, diagnostic capabilities, and faster access to innovation in areas such as genetic and rare diseases. For Mayada Al-Ahmad, General Manager GCC at BMS, the broader ambition is clear: building a healthcare system capable of delivering sustainable and meaningful impact for patients across the region.

What experiences have most shaped your leadership approach at Bristol Myers Squibb and your perspective on healthcare transformation in the GCC?

I have been with BMS for more than 24 years, mainly in commercial roles across the Middle East, Africa, Turkey, and Russia. Most recently, I served as Strategy and Operations Director for BMS's Intercontinental Markets organisation, covering markets across Latin America, Canada, Brazil, Turkey, the Middle East and Africa, as well as parts of Eastern Europe. A major focus of that role was accelerating access to innovation and ensuring patients across these regions could benefit from new therapies faster.

Being from the Middle East myself, I was also very focused on raising the visibility and strategic importance of the region globally and ensuring innovation reaches patients here without delay. Alongside my professional experience, I have lived and worked across Jordan, Dubai, and Canada, where I spent seven years as a community and consultant pharmacist. That direct interaction with patients continues to shape the way I think about healthcare today and reinforces a belief that has guided me throughout my career: meaningful healthcare transformation must always start and end with the patient.

With the GCC undergoing rapid healthcare transformation, where are you focusing your priorities as General Manager for Saudi Arabia and the Gulf?

Stepping into this role as General Manager for Saudi Arabia and the Gulf is both a privilege and a responsibility, at a time when the region is undergoing one of the most ambitious healthcare transformations globally. The scale of investment in genomics, precision medicine, and broader healthcare capabilities across the GCC is immense and aligns closely with our mission at BMS to help patients prevail over serious diseases. Increasingly, the region is not only viewed as a growth market, but as a strategic partner in turning scientific advances into real patient outcomes.

My initial focus has been on aligning strategy, access, and execution around three key priorities. The first is deep ecosystem integration, working with health authorities, healthcare professionals, patient organisations, and the broader scientific community to embed innovation effectively within local systems and national healthcare priorities. These partnerships create sustainable care pathways that support patients, empower healthcare professionals, and build long-term healthcare resilience.

The second priority is accelerating targeted access and precision medicine. Scientific progress has value only when it reaches patients, and as diagnostic and genomic capabilities continue to expand across the GCC, our aim is to ensure those advances translate to timely treatment in areas such as beta-thalassemia and obstructive hypertrophic cardiomyopathy (oHCM), where earlier diagnosis and integrated care can significantly improve outcomes.

The third priority is people and culture, because sustainable impact ultimately depends on strong and inclusive teams. Throughout my career, I have been a strong advocate for inclusive leadership, organisational resilience, and talent development. In these first months, I have prioritized collaboration, psychological safety, and ensuring our teams are equipped to perform at their highest level while continuing to keep patients at the centre of all decisions.

How do genetic and rare diseases fit within Bristol Myers Squibb's broader strategy in the region?

At BMS, we focus on diseases with high unmet need and complex scientific challenges, which is why areas such as beta-thalassemia and oHCM have become important priorities for us. Both conditions are often diagnosed late, limiting timely care, especially in regions where inherited and genetic disorders are a significant public health burden. What differentiates our approach is that we are not simply looking at incremental improvements in care, but at bringing forward

first-in-class and potentially transformative therapies designed to fundamentally change how these diseases are treated and ultimately improve outcomes for patients.

Beyond genetic diseases, BMS remains focused on four core therapeutic areas: Oncology, Haematology, Cardiovascular disease, and Neuroscience. Oncology and haematology remain global pillars, with immunotherapies, innovations for blood disorders, multiple myeloma, lymphomas, and CAR-T approaches. At the same time, neuroscience is becoming an increasingly important area for us, including recent innovations in schizophrenia and ongoing research in Alzheimer's disease. The key is ensuring these advances reach GCC patients swiftly while meeting regional healthcare priorities.

From a regional perspective, the Middle East has a distinct genetic and rare disease profile shaped in part by inherited conditions and population structure, which makes areas such as beta-thalassemia and cardiomyopathies an important part of the healthcare burden regionally. Our approach focuses on aligning regional realities to deliver therapies that provide measurable clinical value across the GCC.

What does "launch excellence" mean in practice in the GCC, particularly in complex areas such as genetic and rare diseases?

In diseases such as beta-thalassemia and oHCM, innovation for us means addressing disease biology to improve patient outcomes and reduce healthcare system burden. In oHCM, targeting the underlying pathophysiology has the potential not only to improve symptoms but also to enhance patients' functional capacity and overall quality of life.

At the same time, developing a medicine is only one part of the equation. Advancing patient access, particularly in genetic and rare diseases, requires a much broader effort around diagnostics, clinician education, patient engagement, and stakeholder collaboration to ensure timely, sustainable delivery.

That is why, for us at BMS, launch excellence goes well beyond the regulatory approval itself to ensure healthcare systems are ready to adopt innovation quickly. In high-burden diseases such as beta-thalassemia, system readiness becomes critical to accelerating access to innovation. Strengthening diagnostic capabilities, supporting earlier diagnosis, and helping build more integrated models of care are all essential parts of that process, which is why we work closely with regional health authorities and healthcare stakeholders to support more sustainable healthcare solutions.

GCC health authorities have become increasingly agile when it comes to innovation, with markets such as Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Qatar, and Kuwait, showing strong commitment to accelerating review timelines for areas of high unmet need. In some cases, authorities are seeking submissions and approvals at timelines closely aligned with the FDA, reflecting both the pace of healthcare transformation taking place across the region and the ambition to ensure patients gain access to innovation without delay.

Increasingly, Saudi Arabia and the UAE are being recognised as early launch markets. This highlights how far the region has progressed. It also reinforces its position at the forefront of innovative healthcare and precision medicine.

Beyond bringing therapies to market, how is BMS helping strengthen the broader healthcare ecosystem for genetic and rare diseases across the GCC?

As the GCC continues to transform its healthcare infrastructure at a remarkable speed, one of the realities in genetic and rare diseases is that execution requires a very different mindset. You are not simply introducing a treatment; you are helping build the diagnostic and care infrastructure around it, which means working closely with healthcare authorities, clinicians, and the broader healthcare ecosystem to identify system gaps and strengthen the pathways needed to support earlier diagnosis, coordinated care, and more integrated disease management.

One example is our collaboration with the National Heart Centre in Saudi Arabia on oHCM, addressing diagnostic pathways, registry development, and care coordination to enable earlier

identification and integrated management for patients living with complex cardiovascular disease. This reflects our commitment to long-term, partnership-driven execution.

That same philosophy extends to clinical research, because we believe patient access begins long before a medicine is commercialised. BMS continues to expand its clinical research footprint in Saudi Arabia and the UAE, working with local investigators to bring global studies closer to patients while strengthening regional research capabilities. Trials are currently underway across both markets in areas including oncology, lung cancer, haematology, cell therapy, and alpha-thalassaemia, reflecting both the region's evolving research environment and its distinct genetic disease landscape. By embedding access earlier through clinical development, we can ensure evidence reflects local needs and accelerates exposure to innovative science.

Why does talent development remain such an important priority for BMS in the region?

My journey from an early commercial leadership role to General Manager reflects the kind of inclusive and performance-driven culture we actively try to foster across the organisation. At BMS, we know that delivering on our commitment to patients is only possible when we truly operate as one team, bringing together different perspectives around a shared sense of purpose. That is why developing regional talent is not simply an organisational priority for us, but a core strategic focus across the GCC.

We are committed to building a highly capable local workforce equipped to lead the next chapter of healthcare innovation in the region, offering clear pathways, leadership opportunities, and promoting diversity, inclusion, and gender equality. Transferring expertise and developing future leaders will undoubtedly support the GCC's healthcare transformation. Ultimately, our people remain the driving force behind our innovation, our partnerships, and our long-term impact across the GCC.

Looking ahead, what ambitions do you have for Bristol Myers Squibb across the GCC, and what would success look like over the next few years?

For me, success starts with ensuring innovative treatments reach patients as quickly and responsibly as possible, while continuing to strengthen the broader healthcare ecosystem for sustained transformation. Over the coming years, we will focus on accelerating the next generation of scientific advances into the region, building the right capabilities and infrastructure, and

deepening partnerships with governments, clinicians, local experts, and the wider healthcare community. Ultimately, the ambition is not only to bring innovative therapies to patients, but to contribute to a healthcare system that values innovation and is increasingly equipped to deliver sustainable and meaningful impact across areas such as oncology, haematology, cardiovascular disease, neuroscience, and genetic disorders.

The GCC is advancing rapidly in healthcare innovation, precision medicine, and system modernisation, aligning closely with our goals. Saudi Arabia and the UAE are integral to the global healthcare transformation story, and for BMS, being a long-term partner means working alongside all stakeholders to shape the future of care.

[See more interviews](#)