

Dr. Muhammed Majeed: Founder, SAMI/Sabinsa Group of Companies

Tuesday, March 29, 2016 | Ajay Ghosh



“He (Dr. Muhammed Majeed) came as an immigrant to the United States with \$8 dollars in his pocket; his ambition was to work and study – both of which he did. His business commitment was very clear, make the best ingredients, give the absolute best service and make sure it’s based on real science,” Shaheen Majeed, Sabinsa’s Marketing Director, described proudly of his dad recently.

Dr. Muhammed Majeed, founder of SAMI/Sabinsa Group of Companies, was born and raised in Kerala, India. He has been a visionary with zeal and commitment all along. It was his urge to establish himself not just as a scientist but also an entrepreneur that made him fly beyond his home turf. In 1975, after obtaining a degree in pharmacy, he came to the United States, where he earned a Master’s Degree in Industrial Pharmacy from Long Island University, New York, and soon he proceeded to do his doctoral degree in the same field from St John’s University, New York.

His experiences working in Pfizer Inc, Carter-Wallace and Paco Research, gave him the exposure and confidence to start something all by himself. In 1988, Dr. Majeed established Sabinsa Corporation in the state of New Jersey, USA with the objective of importing and marketing generic drugs into the US for the drug molecules coming off patents.

Dr. Majeed rightly anticipated and assessed the undeveloped market opportunity that existed in providing Ayurveda-based products to the developed world. "The vision of a research scientist takes on social and commercial expressions." This in short explains the genesis and growth of Sami Labs Limited.



Dr. Majeed was a pioneer in introducing to the US market a new line of products based on Indian herbal plants, the value of Ayurveda, and this ancient Indian system of medicine that could act as a complete curative to various ailments that affect humanity. The persistent efforts made by Dr. Majeed in the early 90's in the field of Ayurveda did reap benefits among the Americans. They started recognizing the potential of Ayurveda which was soon considered as Alternative medicine. By 2000 it became popularly accepted as Complementary medicine and now it is part of the Integrated medicine.

To facilitate the increased demand for innovative application-based products, Sami Labs Limited (formerly known as Sami Chemicals & Extracts Limited) was set up in 1991 at Singasandra in Bangalore, India, as a research and development facility. The facility now has over 500 talented and committed staff working for the company. Sami Labs combines manufacturing and global marketing of nutraceuticals and fine chemicals with cutting edge research. Although the transition from a researcher to heading a marketing company was a tremendous challenge, Dr. Majeed handled it successfully. Sabinsa Corporation, the research oriented pharmaceutical and nutraceutical marketing company's main thrust and focus is to research and innovate new products.

Sabinsa's mission is to provide alternative and complementary natural products for human nutrition and wellbeing. Over the past 27 years, Sabinsa has brought to market more than 100 standardized botanical extracts, and privately funded clinical studies in conjunction with prestigious institutions in support of these products.

Sabinsa Corporation manufactures and markets phytonutrients, Ayurvedic herbal extracts and specialty fine chemicals for nutritional, pharmaceutical and food industries. Sabinsa has carved a niche for itself by its extensive research support for its customers about products, and the scientific credentials of its key technical staff.

The company grew faster and has made its presence felt across the globe. In order to cater to the expanding global market, Sami Labs has presence and strategic alliances in USA, Europe, Japan, Australia, Middle East, South Africa, China, Vietnam, Philippines, Malaysia, South Korea and Indonesia. The global revenue of the company stood at USD 70 million (for 2015), with an employee strength of 150 people globally, more than 750 in India alone, and having over 110 scientists worldwide. At present, the New Jersey based firm employs over 60 people.

Both QUALITY and INNOVATION were and continues to be the key components that resulted in awards. In addition, Sami pioneered the research and marketing of a number of phytonutrients based on Indian raw materials.

“It is my firm belief that integration of modern scientific techniques into Ayurvedic herbal armamentarium can produce new drug molecules for India and for the world,” Dr. Majeed says. “A revisit into Ayurveda with the help of modern scientific approach from pharmaceutical era can produce very useful and safe products. Drug discovery from Ayurveda using technologies developed in the pharmaceutical era, can result in substantial number of newer molecules for modern therapeutic use.”

According to him, there is a greater need to adopt the modern testing and evaluation tools to identify useful herbal drug molecules. “I call upon all established Ayurvedic groups in India to work with research based groups such as Sami Labs to develop innovative therapeutic products for the molecular age. We at Sami Labs welcome such initiatives,” he says.

Recognizing the many challenges the herbal industry faces today, Dr. Majeed says, “Natural product industry is facing its biggest challenge now. On top of the misguided genomic testing, we are now faced with adulteration of natural products especially Curcumin. Those of us who have spent our careers making and selling products to improve the health of our fellow human beings know that those writing and saying dietary supplements are either dangerous, unregulated or have no benefit are mistaken, and most of the criticism is unfounded.”

Recognizing the importance of respecting and honoring Intellectual Property, which he believes is essential for continued innovation, Dr. Majeed refers to a new threat that “must be stamped out to preserve the integrity of the industry and safety of the products we all make.” He was alarmed, for instance that a company selling Curcumin extract in India for export to the US was adulterating their product with 43% synthetic curcumin, but not revealing the synthetic contents. He calls upon the trade associations and all companies committed to the future of the industry “to work together to discover how widespread this deceptive practice is, and to take action to weed it out.”

Dr. Majeed believes that Sabinsa is not alone in being dedicated to providing high quality, science-based products to enhance human health and wellbeing, and “I call on like-minded companies and the industry’s trade associations to weed out those companies and practices that undermine quality and erode confidence in the entire industry.”

Recognitions and awards came on its way, as Sami Labs and its dedicated staff work hard to innovate and find new natural remedies to prevent and manage the illnesses that affect humanity. Sami Lab’s investment in research and patents, and the pivotal role of these efforts in garnering credibility for scientifically validated ingredients, is a case in point. “For example, our BioPerine® patent brought out the concept that it is not what you eat, but what you absorb that is important in the area of nutrition,” Dr. Majeed says. This formed the basis of a fundamental paradigm shift in how we approach supplementation. Numerous scientific publications in subsequent years validated this concept.

Among the 110 patents now held by Sabinsa and Sami Labs, seven are specific to an ingredient the company trademarked as BioPerine®, Sabinsa’s standardized 95% piperine extract that has been shown in clinical research to increase the absorption of nutrients in nutritional supplement formulations.

After a sizable investment of time and resources, we determined that a 95% purified piperine extracted from pepper was able to enhance the absorption and bioavailability of a large array of dietary ingredients,



safely and effectively. The enormous investment Sabinsa made has resulted in seven patents on BioPerine®, with its clearly novel use and process. These patents are strictly enforced in the United States (US 5,536,506; US 5,744,161; US 5,972,382; US 6,054,585), Canada (CA2247467), Europe (EP0810868) and Japan (JP3953513).

Today, black pepper extract is a relatively well known ingredient in nutritional supplement formulas as a bioavailability enhancement ingredient. Prior to Sabinsa's introduction of BioPerine®, it was unheard of.



Dr. Majeed has provided a service for an untold number of future scientists and entrepreneurs. Not satisfied with his success, Dr. Majeed wanted to share his wealth with those in need and wanted to encourage true research around the world. Dr. Majeed Foundation, which he has so generously established, gives charitable contributions to schools and institutions worldwide by providing computers and rebuilding lecture halls, has recently taken on a mission to provide care to children with cancer.

SAMI's research based new products picked up recognition from Governments across the world and several in the industry from around the world. Sami received the National award for quality products from the President of India in the area of Basic Drugs. Sami Labs was also honored twice by the Spices Board of India, receiving one award for developing a market for Garcinia cambogia and the other for export performance.

In 1997, Sabinsa Corporation had been ranked America's 90th fastest growing company by INC. Magazine. Sabinsa also ranked 7th in New Jersey among the fastest growing Technology based companies (New Jersey Fast 50).

In early 1999, Sami Labs started a division called Sami Spices based at Cochin, India to promote procurement and marketing of spices. Sami Labs, Ltd. was named "Best Innovation and Technology Company" at the Food 360° Conference organized by the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI).

Dr. Majeed received awards from several Indian American groups for his enterprising work and progress. He also received the 1996 Entrepreneur of the year award by the National Federation of Asian Americans. Sami Labs recently received the "Best Customer Centric Business Partner for 2012" award from Abbott Healthcare. The award was related to Sami Labs supplying ingredients to Abbott for their product MelaGlow New, an innovative depigmentation cream formulated using Sami's ingredients.

Dr. Majeed was given the Daniel B. Stateman Award for Distinguished Alumni from Dr. David Taft at Long Island University's 121st Graduation ceremony in Brooklyn, New York in 2010.

The Ellis Island Medal of Honor, which is sanctioned by the U.S. Congress, symbolizes the spirit of America in their celebration of patriotism, tolerance, brotherhood and diversity. It recognizes those who have made it their mission to share with those less fortunate their wealth of knowledge, indomitable courage, boundless compassion, unique talents and selfless generosity; all while maintaining the traditions of their ethnic heritage as they uphold the ideals and spirit of America. Dr. Majeed was presented with the medal at a gala event held on May 15th, 2004, on Ellis Island, New York.

In March 2016, Dr. Majeed was honored for his pioneering role in building the nutraceuticals industry when he was inducted into the Hall Of Legends at Natural Products Expo West on in Anaheim California by New Hope Network, which honors the industry's greatest contributors each year in the Hall of Legends ceremony, with "12 individuals who have devoted significant portions of their lives making this industry what it is today."

In presenting the award, Fred Linder, New Hope Network Group President, said "Dr. Muhammed Majeed is, quietly, a groundbreaking figure in the nutritional and cosmeceutical ingredients industries. As the founder of both Sabinsa Corporation and Sami Labs, his commitment to utilizing science to discover why traditional Indian herbs are beneficial and then expand their applications has resulted in an array of unique branded ingredients backed by over 100 patents across the globe."

"It is gratifying to have our dedication to innovation recognized by our peers," says Dr. Majeed. "We appreciate such recognition of our talented, highly educated and proficient team."

With more than 100 full-time scientists conducting ongoing research in India and the United States, Sabinsa and parent company Sami Labs Ltd. continue to develop, patent and manufacture phytonutrients for the world market, with ingredients that are both Halal and Kosher certified. Sabinsa is a company dedicated to the principles of tradition, innovation and research. Sabinsa's efforts have begun to earn the company vast recognition, in addition to growing sales. Dr. Muhammed Majeed worked hard with confidence. His highly successful life story inspires all who are ambitious, want to dream big and work hard earnestly to make those dreams come true. For more information, visit www.sabinsa.com.