

[Dr. Sanjay Advani, Commerce & Industry Magazine - March 2012 Issue, Published Article](#)



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BETA HEALTHCARE Commitment to serving mankind innovatively

For many years, the fact that herbal medicine has been held in disdain in the conventional pharmaceutical industry in the country has been an open secret. This has resulted from various reasons including herbal medicine practitioners being erroneously associated with magic or witchcraft; the dispensing of the drugs being done in poor, dingy and unhygienic premises; lack of proper scientific dosage including data on active ingredients and lack of evidence on proper production procedures among others.

Therefore, the bold and pioneering measure by Beta Healthcare International Ltd. (guided by its motto 'Caring for All') to integrate herbal medicine molecules in their conventional medicines range is innovative and welcome as Kenyans seek to access better healthcare that is in tandem with modern global trends.

Beta Healthcare international Ltd (Kenya), located in the heart of Nairobi's industrial area along Mogadishu Road, has (since 2003) been part of the Shelys Africa Group that is also the holding company for the Shelys Pharmaceuticals Limited (in Dar es Salaam – Tanzania) and Beta Healthcare Uganda Limited (in Kampala – Uganda). The Group has established itself as the leading provider of healthcare needs in the East Africa region by providing quality over the counter (OTC) and prescription medication at affordable prices.

The Company's products are not only found in Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania but also in other sub-Saharan Africa countries viz. in Rwanda, Burundi, Ethiopia, Malawi and Zambia. Moreover, plans are in place to take the products to Western Africa. In the recent past, the Company has introduced products containing herbal molecules to meet the ever-rising demand for natural products by an increasingly discerning clientele.

Commerce & Industry magazine recently met Shelys Africa Group's Chief Executive Officer, Dr. Sanjay Advani, at the Company's head office located on the Mogadishu Road five acre plot that also houses the Company's new GMP (good manufacturing practice) state-of-the-art factory. Dr. Advani shed light on the Company's operations and aspirations.

He explained that Aspen Holdings acquired 60% Shelys Africa capital shares in May 2008 in an alliance that has provided the foundation for Aspen's expansion into East and Central African markets. This shall also enable access to and availability of affordable and high quality generic brands in the continent given that Aspen Pharmacare is one among the largest pharmaceuticals manufacturers in the southern hemisphere.

With manufacturing plants in Nairobi, Kenya and Dar-es-salaam, Tanzania and sales & marketing offices & warehouses in Kampala, Uganda and employing over 1,000 people in the three East African companies, Shelys Africa produces a diverse range of over the counter (OTC) & prescription medicines (such as antibiotics and pain relievers) and other fast moving consumer goods (FMCTs); the OTC products have been popular over the years in the region and include household favourites such as Action, Maramoja, Salimia, Good Morning lung tonic, Betasil herbal lozenges, Joint care (for pain relief in children) and Zoom condoms.

In Kenya, Beta Healthcare International Ltd. has employed over 300 people who are guided everyday by the Company's mantra of Honesty, Integrity, Passion and Trust – values that cascade right from management to the rank-and-file workers sustaining and promoting motivation and focus.

The Group aims to have the maximum number of trained employees such as qualified and registered pharmacists and marketing professionals to facilitate good manufacturing practices and quality assurance in all production, warehousing, marketing and distribution among other processes and procedures. The Company values people as one of its core assets, an eventuality that leaves the employees feeling like a family.

Over the years, the Group has undertaken continuous improvement strategies underpinned by among others the relocation of Beta Healthcare International Ltd to the Mogadishu Rd. factory. The Group has diversified into the nutritional/herbal offerings niche and has recently introduced a wide range of herbal products that satisfy a wide range of customer needs.

"We have introduced herbal molecules into some of our products to meet clients' enthusiasm for some more natural products that are certified to have fewer side effects. Globally, many people are turning to natural products and going 'green' to harness the benefits of natural products and we are keen to keep pace and satisfy our customers," explained Dr. Advani.

The demand for herbal and natural products including food supplements that has grown sustainably (and globally) in the last six years justifies the Company's (as the first one in the EAC region) strategy to introduce the products.

The products include Jointcare – a herbo-mineral formulation that relieves joint problems effectively; Memcap – that enhances memory and is produced in tablet form and syrup for adults and children respectively; Livelife that protects the liver against acute and chronic infections, toxic and drug-induced hepatitis and alcoholic hepatic degeneration; Slimtrim that is efficient in weight management; Zoom for stamina and vitality and with a variant for both men and women and Betasil Herbal Lozenges for sore throat. "The response for these long-term therapies

with no side effects and especially at a time when the whole world inclines towards technology and practices has been very encouraging,” Dr. Advani added.

Other new products introduced by the Company include Zoom condoms; Podine mouth wash and Gargle; Beta Gripe Water; Dr. Woodworths range that includes Dr. Woodworths Headache roll-on, Dr. Woodworths Antiseptic disinfectant, Dr. Woodworths Pain balm; Infacare Baby Milk formula and Juices (with meticulously balanced baby nutrients)

Being a firm believer in ‘giving back’ to Society, Beta Healthcare International Ltd. is involved in several CSR (corporate social responsibility) initiatives. Some years back, the Company pioneered a drive to promote hygiene in all Kenya prisoners’ it imported antiseptic soaps that were distributed freely to all prisoners. “We believe not just in creating wealth but all in giving something back to Society,’ explained Dr. Advani.

The Company helps destitute children and children in children’s homes with healthcare and engages disadvantaged women in projects that generate income for women. It also provides help for the disabled and PLWA (people living with AIDS-HIV). In recent times the Company has partnered with the South African embassy in funding a school for small children. “We also contribute by taking time off to visit these people, giving them loving support and monetary and material donations mostly of our products,” Dr. Advani added.

The company conforms and adheres to environmental standards as per cGMP guidelines and with respect to individual country guidelines as set out by different bodies. Keen on waste management, it operates effluent treatment plants in its factories and conducts environmental audits as required in law.

Apart from strictly adhering to international quality and standards in its modern cGMP plant, the Company packages affordable and pocket friendly products that are widely and easily available in all parts of the country and EAC region; there is mutual understanding between the customers and the Company.

Dr. Advani identified various challenges met by the Company in its day-to-day operations. Ninety-five percent of the raw materials and packaging content required for production and distribution are imported and quite expensive. It takes an average of 60 - 90 days for these to reach the Mombasa Port and another 30 days to reach the plant resulting in cycle that has to be meticulously monitored owing to delays at the port.

Counterfeits present another challenge in the EAC region where the governments allow indiscriminate importation of all manner of medicine and medical devices unlike in West Africa where lists of products not to be imported and those for which duty has to be paid ensure effective ban and control of dumping. “The government should allow importation only where and when manufacturing is lacking and since most counterfeits originate from exporting countries, we are working closely with the Kenya Association of Manufacturers (KAM) and Kenya Intellectual Property Institute (KIPI) to enlighten the government on this challenge,” Dr. Advani explained.

Running a highly interactive website that responds to clients queries within 24 hrs, the Company not only sells its products on-line but also promotes preventive healthcare giving tips on proper hygiene, fighting infections, prevention of obesity and other lifestyle diseases such as diabetes and gout and the role of herbal food supplements in disease prevention.

Owing to its great concern for its employees, retention of workers has been a unique characteristic of the Company. Some of the employees, including heads of departments – HODs – have stayed with the company for as long as 15 – 20 years. Consequently they have benefited from the Company’s strong belief in regular training and in the process have become highly competent and specialized in their different chosen fields. The regular training for the rank-and-file employees has ensured that many have moved up the ladder and helped in strengthening the Kenyan labour sector.

Friendly, confident and focused

Friendly, confident and focused and yet a bit taciturn, Dr. Sanjay graduated in Business Management from Mumbai University before acquiring his MBA under articulation agreement with New Hampshire College, Manchester USA. He then proceeded to complete his PhD Degree in Pharmaceutical Marketing 25 years ago.

Dr. Sanjay has already acquired 23 years broad experience in the pharmaceutical industry in renowned companies such as Roche and Anglo French Drugs & Industries Limited, Lupin Limited.

In 2007, he joined Beta Healthcare as General Manager – SBU Head, and thereafter was promoted to the position of Chief Marketing Officer (Shelys Africa Group). Today, Dr. Sanjay is the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Shelys Africa Group.