

THE HEALTH CAFÉ

LET'S TALK HEALTH

March 2012. ₹ 100

**A FAT
BUSTING
PILL!**

**ALCOHOL:
how much
is too
much ?**

**GET RID OF
CELLULITE**

**NUTRACEUTICALS
FOR WELLNESS**

**Easy
Endoscopy**

DR. MUHAMMED MAJEED
**Bridging
Ayurveda
and
Modern
Medicine**

Dr. Muhammed Majeed:
**Bridging Ayurveda
and
Modern Medicine**

Kavita Srinivasa, Bengaluru

This is the story of a new molecule. The Ayurveda molecule rediscovered by Dr. Muhammed Majeed. Which was introduced in tiny, addictive doses of wellness to Americans.

A pharmacologist turned scientist and innovator, Dr. Majeed had an exhilarating, sometimes rocky road to tread. His flagship company Sami Labs, and the American arm Sabinsa Corporation now create nutraceutical, cosmeceutical and pharmaceutical wonders that guarantee health, wellness and beauty.





Ayurveda is the science of life. It focuses on the prevention of an ailment before it manifests itself. It gives one the right direction on how to live a disciplined life, take the right diet and to be cautious about keeping good health. Considered as a holistic healing process, Ayurveda, for thousands of years, has been a trusted and time-tested system of medicine. But there was a time when Ayurveda grappled for a foothold in the face of the popularity of modern science. The foray of modern medicine backed by modern science and its technological advances made Ayurveda almost irrelevant and out of place. Modern medicine is absolutely a modern science with all its properties tested, validated and standardised. It is credible and acceptable in any part of the world.

The time was quite ripe when Dr. Muhammed Majeed took PhD in Industrial Pharmacy from St. John's University, New York and worked with pharmaceutical majors like Pfizer that helped him hone his skills in drug formulations. It was the late eighties - a time when Americans were yearning to 'look good and feel good' which later evolved into the pursuit of 'wellness', an overall feeling of well-being. And that very soon grew into a big buzz-word, driving a new business in the United States that was focussed on new wellness initiatives. The basis of wellness was a total deviation from the existing eating habits. People started looking at dietary supplements that would keep them healthy and at the same time keep illness away. Then emerged the usage 'nutraceuticals', a combination of two words 'nutrition' and 'pharmaceuticals' which means a food that provides health and medical benefits.

Dr. Majeed looked at India, his mother country and its own

Ayurveda, the more than 5000 years old science of life. He realized that there were absolute cures in Ayurveda for the various ailments that Americans suffered from. He went around telling the Americans of the wonders of Ayurveda. But the Americans, who were particular about clinical evidence for anything medical, were not convinced.

A seasoned researcher and scientist by then, Dr. Majeed went deep into the science of herbs. The result was amazing. He used the cutting edge technology of Industrial Pharmacy to convert Indian herbs into the modern drug form. Taking active molecules of the herbs and researching into their efficacy in the modern context, he embarked upon a novel task and opened up a treasure-trove of great knowledge, which the Americans accepted. They started recognizing the potential of Ayurveda and termed it the Alternative Medicine. By 2000, this was popular as Complementary Medicine and now it is called Integrated Medicine.

It was the beginning of a success story. Says Dr Muhammed Majeed: "As the concept of nutraceuticals is aligned to "food as medicine", these ingredients had to be presented as phytonutrients to support health and wellness, rather than to treat or cure diseases. Ayurvedic herbs have been researched in this context, and their active constituents isolated, characterized and studied. Clinical research with respect to preventive health maintenance has validated the use of these herbs in dietary supplement formulations to support cardiovascular health, brain health, weight management, and healthy blood sugar and blood pressure levels; as well as in sports nutrition and healthy aging".

Dr. Muhammed Majeed, is best described as an entrepreneur with a scientific vision. His success stems from the fact that he combines the

best of both worlds. He uses modern technology to harness the curative properties of Ayurveda. Today, as the Managing Director of Sami Labs Limited, Dr Majeed has contributed significantly to the nutraceutical, cosmeceutical and pharmaceutical markets in the US and the world.

The Journey

Dr. Majeed grew up in Kollam in Kerala, which was idyllic, perfectly suited for poetic pursuits. Instead, he decided to charter a scientific course by plunging into the R&D domain. His mother, Fathima Beevi has been his guiding force, giving him a sense of roof-over-head responsibility very early in life. "She made me what I am. My father died when I was 12," said Dr. Majeed softly. Though she was not educated, she had the forethought to instill in her son, the importance of education. Since he had an interest in science, Dr. Majeed graduated in pharmacy from the Thiruvanthapuram Medical College in 1973. After a brief job stint at Thiruvananthapuram he moved on to fulfill his big dream. His story reads like a film script — he landed in the US in 1975 as a 23-year-old with a mere eight dollars in his pocket — and a mind full of dreams. He pursued a Masters degree in Industrial Pharmacy from the Long Island University and became a Junior Scientist at Pfizer. He could have settled down in Pfizer, but his ambition urged him to do a doctorate in Industrial Pharmacy from St. John's University. "I worked in the morning at Pfizer and spent the evenings doing my PhD," he said, matter-of-factly. Looking back on his formative years Dr. Majeed says, "The mind is a terrible thing to waste." This viewpoint made Dr Majeed turn to philanthropy, resulting in the Dr. Majeed Foundation, an endeavour that educates the needy. Two training centres at Kochi, Kerala and



Kunigal, Karnataka helped educate children in MS office and Desktop application software.

Probably his concern for education and ability to think beyond urged Dr Majeed's alma mater to recognize his contribution. At Long Island University's 121st graduation ceremony in Brooklyn, New York, Dr Majeed received the Daniel B. Stateman award for distinguished alumni in May 2010.

Bitten by the Entrepreneurial Bug

In 1988, cushioned in a senior position in a global pharma company, the research scientist

was bitten by the proverbial entrepreneurial bug and started Sabinsa Corporation in the basement of his house. The company imported drugs, which were coming off-patent. The lady luck shone on him as the generic drug business was beginning in the US, with abundant opportunities for him to pursue. One needs to cultivate skills for self-marketing and Dr. Majeed knew to play his cards well even in the early days. "In 1994-95, I ran a program in the US titled Sabinsa on Wheels (SOW). 25 companies were invited for a detailed scientific presentation of the products," he said. SOW really sowed the seeds as he traveled

along the American landscape propagating his products. Those who attended the program may not have fully grasped the historical background of the concoctions, but since it was presented by someone who holds a doctoral degree in Industrial Pharmacy from St. John's University, New York, it made sense to them. That's how things worked in his favor.

Global footprint

Gugulipid, a standardized extract, was the first product that Sami Labs marketed globally, in 1991. "Till then India exported castor oil,

senna and psyllium. Gugulipid had undergone pre-clinical and clinical trials at the Central Drug Research Institute (CDRI) in Lucknow. It was already approved in India for its potential to lower cardiovascular diseases," he recalls. Since it already had clinical documentation, he took what can be called a global risk, and began marketing it. His business acumen paid off. The Indian ingredient Gugulipid was used to make nutritional products in the US. In the first year itself, thousands of kilos were exported - first to the US and then to Europe. Citrin®, was the first commercially produced standardized extract of Sabinsa Corporation. Extracted from *Garcinia Cambogia* (Malabar tamarind or Brindall berry or Kokum) and launched in 1991, Citrin achieved worldwide recognition for its weight management capabilities and received US patent in 1998. He elaborates, "the kokum we use as a flavoring agent in our Kerala fish curry was used effectively in weight loss products in the US. It's now grown abundantly in various parts of Karnataka."

After that, word-of-mouth took over and he pushed the boundaries like no other. Ayurvedic herbs and concoctions met with approval across distant shores. The writing on the wall was clear as the health and wellness entrepreneur took giant strides with potions of what came to be known as 'Alternative medicine'. By 2000, the term was 'Complementary Medicine' and now it is called 'Integrated Medicine'. Regardless of the evolving terminology, Dr. Majeed continued to identify the medicinal value of ayurvedic ingredients, which could be used in the wellness category to alleviate pain. Regardless of the evolving terminology, Dr. Majeed continued to identify the medicinal value of ayurvedic ingredients, which could be used in the wellness

category to alleviate pain. Take for instance, Sornip, a drug extracted from *Boswellia Serrata* (Indian frankincense), otherwise known as Kunthirukkam in Malayalam, which is an excellent anti-psoriatic agent. Sami Labs holds the patent and drug manufacturing rights from the Drugs Controller of India for this product. It is licensed to pharma major Cipla for marketing, being an allopathic drug. Forslean is another product that the company sells as a potential drug that manages body weight and enhances lean body mass. Forslean

manufactures and markets phytonutrients, Ayurvedic herbal extracts and specialty fine chemicals for nutritional, pharmaceutical and food industries the world over. Sabinsa is the marketing arm of Sami Labs and has strong presence in the US, Japan and Europe. It has offices in Australia and South Africa, among others.

Some of the milestones of Sabinsa include Bioperine, a piperine composition derived from black pepper extract. This is a standardized



is the trademark name of Forskohlin, patented in several countries. Sami Labs is headquartered in Bengaluru, but Dr. Majeed stays in New Jersey with his family. A compulsive workaholic, his typical working day begins at 5.30 am, at his desk, setting out the agenda for the day. This could include meetings and time spent in the research unit. Over the years, the double-digit growth dreams have turned into reality. Nevertheless, it took him 20 years to buy a home in the US. "In 1995, I bought three houses for my children within a week. All along I felt it was necessary to invest in my business rather than buying a home," he says. Today, Sabinsa Corporation

extract from black pepper and contains 95 percent piperine, which is clinically proven to enhance the bioavailability of co-administered nutrients in formulations. Consistent research has fetched Sabinsa global recognition, like the Thomas Alva Edison Patent Award for Tetrahydropiperine in 2005. Dr. Majeed was chosen by the National Ethnic Coalition of Organizations (NECO) in the United States to receive its prestigious Ellis Island Medal of Honor. The award, sanctioned by the U.S. Congress, is presented to Americans of diverse origins to recognize their leadership, commitment and service to their own ethnic group and to American

society. Dr. Majeed was presented with the medal at a colorful event held on May 15th, 2004, on Ellis Island, New York.

Back in India, Sami Labs raised a toast to success with Ocufores – which helps combat Glaucoma, which causes blindness and is estimated to affect 67 million people globally. Through patenting, Sabinsa helped create a stable and safe solution of forskolin for ophthalmic use as a drug in treating glaucoma. When the Drugs Controller General of India granted Dr. Majeed the right to manufacture and market Ocufores, it was a final reckoning of his pioneering efforts. For the first time, the Government of India approved a product developed by an Indian company, from natural sources, for use as a pharmaceutical grade drug.

Scientific Breakthrough

Dr. Majeed has consistently expanded his product portfolio through extensive research, product innovations and important scientific breakthroughs. This first-generation entrepreneur is credited with holding 69 US patents, the first being for piperine from black pepper in 1995. Around 60 patents are expected in the next one or two years. "Patents allow us to create innovative products. It also restricts competitors," said the shrewd businessman, who added that he received the first Patent in China for "Process For Preparing Water Soluble Diterpenes And Their Applications" in 2010.

While the patent list goes on, certain research products like Curcuminoids stand out for many reasons. It can be used as a cosmetic as well as an anti-oxidant. "It appealed to the MD Anderson Cancer Centre of Texas as they used it as an anti-cancer compound. They hailed it as Solid Indian Gold." Sami Labs created a white variety of curcuminoids and patented for use in cosmetics.

An Indian at heart

With his pharma background, Dr. Majeed decided to expand his global footprint and set up a R&D facility in India. The political and industrial climate of Bengaluru seemed favorable for Sami Labs Limited, which was established in 1991. Located in a six-acre plot in Peenya, an industrial suburb of Bengaluru, the facility has all the frills of a corporate office. A pair of Kerala lamps, suspended from intricately carved wooden pillars, flanks the guest lounge.

Dr. Majeed comfortably interacts with us in his posh, spacious well-appointed cabin. Artefacts, crystalware, family portraits and formal sitting spaces add to the ambience. Even as you soak it all in, you are led to the R&D area, abuzz with activity even on a bright Sunday morning. Sami Labs conducts R&D in the areas of Standardized Herbal Extracts, Cosmeceuticals, Probiotics, Spice Extracts, Minerals, Fine Chemicals, Phytochemicals and Oils used in the nutritional, pharmaceutical and food industry.

While the R&D remains the nerve centre, Dr. Majeed remains an Indian at heart. In a reversal of sorts, in 1993 he positioned his company as an Indian-based MNC. Sami Labs Limited., the parent company is a research oriented health science company, which is into manufacture and export of standardized herbal extracts, fine chemicals and nutraceuticals. "India has always aided my growth because the Government of India supports research through tax relief schemes," he smiled.

Sami Labs has won the National Award (from Department of Scientific and Industrial Research) for research way back in 2002; and has registered a consistent growth of 25%-30% year on year. Last year it was named "Best Innovation and

Technology Company" at the Food 360° Conference organized by the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI). The book "STEPPING OUT OF THE BRAIN DRAIN" written by Michele R. Pistone and John J. Hoeffner and published by Lexington Books, USA has given a tribute to Dr. Muhammed Majeed and his companies Sabinsa Corporation, and Sami Labs Limited, saying that Dr. Majeed is an excellent example to show that migration of skilled and educated professionals from a developing country to a developed country will benefit both the countries. "Many migrants have set up businesses in their native countries to gain access both to low-cost labor and to their home countries' markets. These new businesses stimulate growth and development by creating new jobs and wealth for sending countries. These migrants also have been instrumental in educating the companies in which they work about business opportunities in the migrants' home countries." says the book.

The India Story - 2012

Wellness in India may be at an early stage, but the presence of luxury spas and wellness products on retail shelves has managed to engage at least a small section of society. He has launched a new company Sami Direct to market his products in India through direct marketing. This year, Dr. Majeed is keenly looking at the Indian market as he feels that the Indian shores offer large volume business. "One third of the Indian population falls into the types of consumers and disease. The country already has 50 million diabetic patients, which is expected to increase to 70 million by 2020," explains the innovator. Till now it was curative health, but now the concern is on preventive health. He



Dr. Majeed in a Coleus farm at Athur, Tamil Nadu

plans to address this critical mass through seminars, the electronic media and webinars. A dedicated toll free number will be set up to make information accessible to people from various parts of the country. The marketing agenda will be handled through Sami Direct. This will now undergo a shift as products will be sold directly to consumers through a distribution network. To this end, Dr. Majeed has already blocked dates on his calendar to traverse the Indian terrain, as his immediate concern is to reach out to as many people as possible. For the first time, he will be venturing out into small towns and places like Baroda and Mumbai. On a lighter vein he adds with a laugh, "I have engaged a Hindi tutor to brush up my Hindi speaking skills. My teacher comes on Sundays and wakes me up early!" His son Shaheen has stepped in as the Marketing Director and has established a state-of-the-art manufacturing unit in Utah. This

facility provides strong formulation support and is equipped to handle various dosage forms. Apart from this, there are manufacturing facilities located in other parts of Bangalore and Hyderabad. Dr. Majeed is now planning to hand over the reins of the company to a holistic team and concentrate fully on research and spending time with his grandchildren. "We are in the process of formulating an anti-cancer drug, that too from an Indian plant. Though cancer is the second largest disease, ironically, the drug is not accessible to the poor because of the cost factor. I would like to work towards making it affordable," he says. His ultimate dream is to make raw materials available for nurturing medicinal plants, as part of cost cutting measures. This endeavor has already begun - small and marginal farmers have been identified in Salem and surrounding districts in Tamil Nadu who will be able to cultivate organic and sustainable Ayurvedic

herbs. The farmers are given technical assistance and trained in good agricultural practices, sustainable herb collection and organic farming. With the help of local NGOs, the company has built a network of small farmers and women's self-help groups, who can procure herbs on a regular basis.

Dr. Majeed expresses his concern about preserving Ayurvedic plants. "Around 460 plants are used in Ayurveda, of which 400 are in the endangered list. We need a Herbal Security Bill like the Food Security Bill to pursue this system of medicine in times to come." Coming from a dedicated entrepreneur who is engaged in preserving, sustaining and disseminating traditional holistic wellness, this could be the key element that ensures that India continues to be the home of Ayurveda and all the potential it holds. *(With inputs from HC desk)*



Nutraceutical excellence at your fingertips!

The Sami and Sabinsa companies have been formulating and creating dozens of health guaranteeing nutraceuticals and cosmeceuticals for more than two decades. These products now reach the discerning consumer in India through their marketing arm, Sami Direct Marketing Pvt. Ltd.

In the past twenty years, the effectiveness of their products have ensured that Sabinsa, USA has developed into a successful multinational, which has a strong presence in regions like USA, Europe, Japan, Australia, China, UAE, South Africa and South America. And the journey continues. The research team is constantly studying and formulating newer products based on Nature's bounty, which assure a safe and effective supplement to address a multitude of the human body's physical, chemical needs.

The R&D facility of Sami Labs in Bengaluru is a multi-disciplinary enterprise, with 120 scientists creating new products. The R&D also works closely with the Government of India and the

Indian Pharmacopoeia Committee on the preparation of Standard Operating Procedures for Ayurvedic herbs and monographs for Indian herbs. The company has a total of six manufacturing units so far, which focus on specific areas like biotechnology, development of new products, Super Critical Fluid Extraction, continuous solvent extraction plant and formulation support to the organization.

All products are available through direct marketing. The proof of their excellence is reflected in the numerous awards that Sami has received over the years.

1994 - National Award for Quality Products (Basic Drugs)

1996 - Certificate of Merit for Outstanding Export Performance in Spice Products, Fine Chemicals, Extracts and Oleoresins, Vegetable Extracts.

2001 - Forslean® wins the Nutracon "Best New Product Award of the Year"

2002 - Award for R&D Efforts in Industry in the category of "Chemical & Allied Industries", Government of India

2004 - Sabinsa Corporation receives the Thomas Alva Edison Patent Award for Forslean from Research & Development Council of New Jersey, USA

2005 - Sabinsa Corporation receives the Thomas Alva Edison Patent Award for Tetrahydropiperine from Research & Development Council of New Jersey

2006 - Sami Labs Ltd receives Golden Award of Excellence in Exports from the Government of Karnataka for the Year 2005-06.

2009 - Sabinsa Corporation receives American Herbal Products Association's Herbal Industry Leader Award

2010 - Sabinsa achieves ISO 22000 Certification

Sami Direct now offers people the chance to use their products for a positive life changing experience and also to work with them and change their career and income graphs as well. "We are backed by a great global marketing experience, which of course is our core strength. It is with this experience that we are foraying into India through our direct marketing platform" says Rajesh Kumar, CEO of Sami Direct.