

HEALTHCARE ACROSS THE GULF: DIVERSE STRATEGIES, FRENCH SOLUTIONS



CCI FRANCE INTERNATIONAL

GCC - FRANCE BUSINESS FORUM

Connecting communities,
sharing expertise



SPONSORS



Market Overview

The healthcare market in the Gulf region presents diverse opportunities and challenges. While the overall **patient population is smaller than in France**, each country offers distinct dynamics:

- **UAE** is considered the most **avant-garde** and mature market in the region, characterized by advanced infrastructure and regulatory openness.
- **Saudi Arabia** represents the largest **market opportunity** due to its population size and scale.

Market Entry Strategies

French healthcare companies seeking to enter the GCC should consider the following strategic approaches:

Distributor and Partner Model

- The distributor model in the Gulf differs significantly from France. Patients are the end customers and the market remains highly competitive.
- Companies should **invest in training their local partners** and **understand the market deeply**.
- **Long-term partnerships** are essential to success.

Regulatory Environment

- Each market varies in terms of regulation. Some markets, like **UAE and Qatar**, are lightly regulated, making them more open to competition.
- Challenges include managing multiple regulatory bodies across different emirates, navigating purchase authorities, and investing time to establish credibility.
- Compliance and adaptability are crucial: companies must **respond to regulations even if they change rapidly**.

Localization

- There has been a shift over the past five years from a purely distribution-focused strategy to a **hybrid and localized approach**, including in-market teams and knowledge transfer.
- **UAE incentivizes localization**, which enhances value chain opportunities and simplifies tender processes. For example, product registration in the UAE can be completed in **24 hours**.
- Being as local as possible strengthens credibility and long-term market positioning.

Key Lessons and Market Insights

- **Direct engagement with prescribers and end-users** is critical. Understanding practitioners' needs and challenges helps establish trust and positions the company as a **trusted advisor**.
- **Partner selection is crucial:** take the necessary time to identify reliable local partners. Multiple partners can provide broader market knowledge and stronger connections with authorities.
- **Continuous assessment of partners** is essential to ensure alignment with company goals and market dynamics.
- **Solution-oriented approaches** tailored to local healthcare needs improve market adoption and competitive positioning.
- **Localization enhances business opportunities:** investing in local operations, complying with regulations, and integrating into the value chain simplifies tender processes and strengthens credibility.
- **Patience and long-term commitment** are necessary: success requires consistent effort, relationship-building, and adaptation to diverse regulatory and market conditions.

Operational Considerations

- **Logistics and supply chain management** are essential, including delivery, warehousing, and inventory management.
- Understanding market specifics, partner performance, and regulatory requirements requires patience and long-term investment.

Key Takeaways for French Companies

1. Prioritize **long-term partnerships** with well-connected local distributors.
2. Invest in **training and knowledge transfer** to partners and teams.
3. Understand practitioners' needs to establish trust and credibility.
4. **Localize operations** as much as possible to comply with regulations and facilitate tender participation.
5. Be patient: entry and growth in GCC healthcare markets takes time due to regulatory diversity and market complexity.