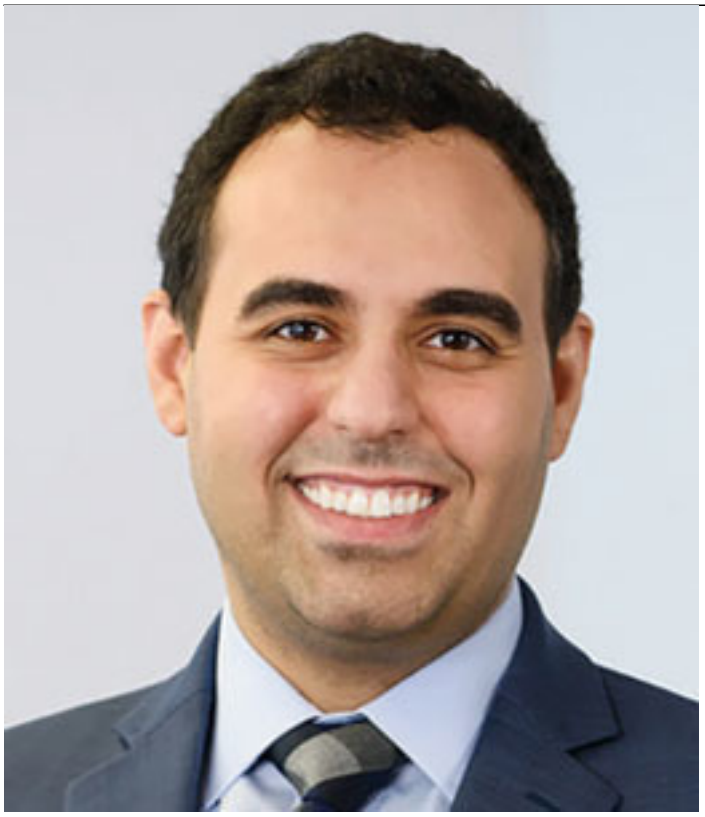
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2020 Top 10 30-Something: Ahmed S. Mousa

Interviews and Profiles





SVP, CORPORATE OPERATIONS & GENERAL COUNSEL

PIERIS PHARMACEUTICALS

BOSTON, MA, USA

AGE: 36

Ahmed S. Mousa believes that the importance of scientific advancement in medicine lies not only in invention but also in accessibility. “Society does not automatically benefit from scientific discovery and innovation. These breakthroughs must advance through different business and legal structures in order to be deployed on a wider scale,” he says. This belief inspired Ahmed to focus his career at the intersection of law and science. As senior vice president of corporate operations and general counsel at Pieris Pharmaceuticals, Ahmed combines his background in molecular biology with his expertise in intellectual property and the legal framework in which biotech companies operate to support the company’s mission of developing and bringing to market next-generation therapies for cancer and respiratory diseases.

Ahmed’s father, a professor of pharmacology specializing in drug discovery and development, inspired his interest in science. Some of Ahmed’s favorite memories are visits to his father’s lab. This interest grew into a passion, and Ahmed went on to study molecular and cell biology as an undergraduate at Cornell University. While working as a student-researcher, Ahmed shares, “I discovered the potential of certain compounds in garlic to act as potent anti-angiogenics, inhibitors of blood vessel formation. The inhibition of new blood vessel formation, can, in turn, serve as a potent cancer treatment by cutting off a tumor’s nutrient supply and its ability to spread.” He applied for a patent on his discoveries and through this experience came to understand the importance of

intellectual property protection to enable the impact of scientific research. He subsequently decided to pursue law school in order to combine his scientific background with a legal education. After graduating, Ahmed specialized in intellectual property litigation and transactions, representing biotech and pharmaceutical companies at a law firm. He reflects, “I learned a great deal from these experiences, and ultimately wanted to be more directly involved in helping to build new drugs.”

At Pieris, Ahmed has helped structure and negotiate collaborations with other pharmaceutical companies to accelerate and expand the company’s drug-development efforts. For example, he helped to facilitate a license and collaboration agreement with AstraZeneca in respiratory diseases — a partnership that could ultimately be worth up to US$2.1 billion. Ahmed led the effort to craft unique and complex licensing structures for this deal, including provisions allowing Pieris to codevelop programs, co-commercialize them in the United States, and manage and oversee pre-clinical development, clinical studies, and regulatory interactions. In structuring this agreement, Ahmed sought to balance clarity with the need for flexibility in a complex, potentially multi-decade alliance.

In Ahmed’s litigation experience, he saw firsthand the impact courtroom disputes can have on small companies and legal departments, taking focus away from a company’s core functions. He cautions, “Make sure that you have a clear understanding of the potential costs and benefits of litigation.” Heeding his own advice, Ahmed generally seeks to include alternative dispute resolution mechanisms in significant company agreements and believes that these provisions have the potential to avoid costly litigation.

Ahmed also emphasizes the need to understand the relevant laws and regulations of the countries where Pieris has offices and conducts clinical trials. When possible, he travels to the company’s research and development hub in Germany. The trips are an opportunity to gain a global perspective on Pieris’ work and interact directly with the R&D team. “It’s essential to know and understand the activities at Pieris because it allows me to support our science and researchers’ efforts,” he says.

In his spare time, Ahmed’s efforts are focused on the two enterprises he co-founded with his sister and father, respectively. Shamsina, a Cairo-based social enterprise, creates affordable solar water heaters for energy-poor communities in Egypt. Ichorx Pharmaceuticals, a preclinical biotechnology company, focuses on treating sickle cell disease. Ahmed’s desire to improve health and quality of life has driven him — and it will take him far at Pieris.



Staff

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