

OM Pharma, a Geneva-based company among the leaders in biotechnology¹



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Josef Troxler, Chief Executive Officer, with Aurélie Duclos, Head of Industrial Development, OM Pharma.

Founded in 1937, OM Pharma aims for excellence in all its activities. It is recognised as one of the world leaders in the field of products made from bacterial lysates². OM Pharma has forged partnerships with some of the most renowned research centres in Switzerland, Europe, the United States and China and is committed to sustainable development.

Interview with Josef Troxler, Chief Executive Officer of OM Pharma. *By Isabel Garcia-Gill.*

OM Pharma is considered a world leader in bacterial lysates², could you tell us more?

The bacterial lysates marketed by OM Pharma are mainly used in the prevention of recurrent infections of the respiratory tract and lower urinary tract (e.g. cystitis). They are the product of lysed bacterial microorganisms³, which, when taken in capsule form, aim to boost the immune system to prevent recurrent viral and bacterial infections in patients at risk.

In Geneva, we have a state-of-the-art biotechnology centre covering the entire manufacturing supply chain of Broncho-Vaxom[®] and Uro-Vaxom[®], from the culture of bacterial cells to the finished products, serialised for the global market.

Your Geneva biotech centre was inaugurated in 2005. How has it developed since then?

In 2005, we inaugurated completely new facilities, with state-of-the-art technologies. Since then, the capacities of our biotechnology centre have doubled and our objective is to increase these capacities once again during the 2021-2025 period.

Is your R&D centre based in Geneva?

Yes, our R&D centre is located in Geneva. **Our reputation allows us to rely on a solid international network of collaboration in pre-clinical research and collaborative development.** We have close ties with renowned university research centres, such as the Pasteur Institute or the University of Arizona.



“We take our responsibilities very seriously as a company, especially with regard to the environment. We have drastically reduced our CO₂ emissions and launched several renewable energy and biodiversity projects.”

Josef Troxler

In Switzerland too, we frequently collaborate with the University Hospitals of Geneva, Basel, Bern and Lausanne and with the EPFL (Ecole Polytechnique Fédérale de Lausanne).

In addition to your flagship products, have you launched others that have also been manufactured in Geneva?

Thanks to discoveries on the mode of action of our bacterial lysates, we have initiated new research aimed at extending their use as immunotherapy for the prevention and treatment of a wide range of respiratory or dermatological diseases, which affect millions of children and adults, including asthma and atopic dermatitis (eczema). We are also working on the treatment of other diseases of the urinary system. Our aim is to continue to produce these bacterial lysates in Geneva.

In addition, OM Pharma is working on the development of new products aimed at improving the lives of patients with diabetic macular oedema, pancreatitis, fibrosis and cancer.

More than CHF 250 million will be allocated to these initiatives and to the extension of the production capacity of the Geneva biotechnology centre.

Does the fact that Geneva is emerging as a centre of excellence in biotechnology allow you to create synergies that are favourable to your own production?

Geneva already has favourable framework conditions. Nevertheless, we would like to see the emergence of a real centre of attraction for the biotechnology industry, with new players in the sector – whose dynamics would benefit everyone. **It is necessary to work more in the common interest of the development of the Geneva region.**

OM Pharma was acquired in 2020. How has this changed the company's strategy or geographical presence?

Etienne Jornod, a Swiss entrepreneur, acquired the company with his partners, with the ambition to continue the global expansion of OM Pharma and to invest in R&D and the sustainable growth of manufacturing capacities in Geneva. It is therefore a long-term and sustainable vision aimed at consolidating, with our employees, a highly innovative biopharmaceutical company based on the unique expertise in bacterial lysates, mastered for decades by OM Pharma.

What are your goals for the next 5 years?

Together with our partners in over 100 countries throughout the world, our goal is to grow our existing portfolio of biopharmaceuticals. At the same time, we plan to venture into new markets in order to strengthen our international footprint, particularly in the United States. To ensure our growth in the future, we are focusing on the development of our portfolio of bacterial lysates, to better meet the medical needs of patients. **This process will be funded by the success of our current products, reinvesting our profits in our development.**

What are the benefits of your presence in Geneva for the Canton?

We are a major employer, with 390 people currently working in Geneva. In the Canton, 100 new positions were created in 2021 alone, in various fields: manufacturing (to meet the growing demand for our products), quality assurance, medical affairs, clinical research, marketing and distribution.

The true value of our company lies in the human quality of its teams, their entrepreneurial spirit and their extraordinary skills. We attach great importance to sharing our knowledge and know-how with future generations. We are looking for talent, establishing partnerships with the Universities of Geneva and Lausanne and EPFL. Within our company, apprentices and trainees represent more than 10% of employees at the Geneva site.

How does your model take sustainable development into account?

We take our responsibilities as a company very seriously, especially when it comes to the environment. We have drastically reduced our CO₂ emissions and launched several renewable energy and biodiversity projects, including the installation of photovoltaic panels on the roofs. We even have bee colonies on our production site and are lucky enough to harvest honey.

In order to encourage soft mobility for our employees, we have installed bicycle shelters, as well as charging stations, available free of charge, for bicycles and electric vehicles. We are also fortunate to be located near Meyrin station and to be able to come to work by public transport. ■

¹ Biotechnology, also called biotech, combines life science (biology) and technologies from other disciplines such as physics, chemistry and computer science. Biotechs are particularly important for the sustainable development of the health industry, agriculture and the environment. They base their research on the use of living products instead of making use, like conventional pharmaceutical companies, of synthetic chemicals.

² Bacterial lysate: product obtained by lysis, i.e. the dissolution of a living bacterial product.

³ Lysis: Fragmentation and disintegration of the molecular structure of tissues, or bacterial cells, exerted by physical, chemical or biological agents (Larousse medical).