

MONEY

MAKING A LIVING

Transforming health care

Health care entrepreneur Dr. Raza Bokhari has spent more than a decade turning around struggling clinical laboratories.

By JOHN ANASTASI
STAFF WRITER

Dr. Raza Bokhari came to America from his native Pakistan in the early 1990s to enter a residency program at a Philadelphia-area hospital, but he quickly realized his true calling was administration and clinical work.

Today, Bokhari runs Bensalem's Parkway Clinical Laboratories, a company poised to capitalize on a drug-screening process that tests saliva rather than urine.

"We're ready for expansion beyond the tri-state area," said Bokhari.

Bokhari was first exposed to health care beyond the hospital during a stint at a startup clinical lab in North Philadelphia in 1991. "It intrigued me and I decided to pursue entrepreneurial experiences in the health care space ... rather than be a caregiver," he said.

In the 1990s, he worked to stabilize the struggling Princeton Bio Medical Laboratories, which is now located in Bristol Township. Convinced his future was in administration, he enrolled in the Fox School of Business at Temple University. He graduated in 2001 with an executive master of business administration degree.

"I built a name in struggling companies I helped turn around," said Bokhari.

In 2001, he took over Lakewood Pathology Associates, a New Jersey company that provides diagnostic and consultative services. "They were going out of business," he said. "They wanted me to help liquidate them, and I bought them."

Under Bokhari's leadership, Lakewood became one of South Jersey's fastest-growing companies. "It now has over 100 employees and gets business from 30 states," said Bokhari, who sold the company in 2006 and left the company in 2007.

In many cases, transforming struggling companies has more to do with altering the corporate culture and philosophy than the product.

"Everyone starts out and naturally they try to be everything to everyone and that's a mistake," he said.

Companies often stretch themselves too thin by trying to do too many things, he said.

"They see [pulling back] as a loss of opportunities, but it's just deferring them to a more opportune time," Bokhari said. "I suggest that companies keep their heads down, keep persevering, continue to believe in themselves and keep it simple."

He is now CEO of Parkway Clinical Laboratories.

Parkway provides drug screenings for rehabilitation centers, parole and probation departments and companies that require job applicants to pass a drug test or require employees to submit to random testing.

Parkway is certified by Bethlehem-based OraSure Technologies Inc. to use its Intercept oral fluid collection technology to perform saliva based screenings. It has offered saliva swabs for rehabilitation centers and parole and probation departments for the last few years, but now it has begun promoting them to corporate clients, too.

"An oral fluid kit is mailed to the client," said Carolyn Bonner, Parkway's business development director. "They do the collection at their facility and send it back. ... There are many benefits; No. 1 is that it's more convenient."

The company doesn't need to send employees to a testing center. They can collect the saliva sample and mail it to Park-



Dr. Raza Bokhari is CEO of Bensalem's Parkway Clinical Laboratories. Bokhari has made it his mission to help stabilize and transform struggling health care companies across the area.

ART GENTILE / STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

way. Bonner said the process is also "more employee-friendly" because some workers find the urine testing process embarrassing.

Bokhari is also a past president of the Pakistani American Public Affairs Committee, a nonprofit organization that works to create better relations between the two nations. Dr. Raza Bokhari is CEO of Bensalem's Parkway Clinical Laboratories. Bokhari has made it his mission to help stabilize and transform struggling health care companies across the area.