

PROMOTING HEALTHY LIFESTYLES and Preventing Diseases



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CONTEXT AND BACKGROUND

Aligned with Vision 2021, the provision of world-class healthcare is one of the six pillars of the National Agenda. UAE will work in collaboration with all health authorities in the country to ensure that all public and private hospitals have cleared and achieved national and international quality standards for medical services as well as their staff.

The National Agenda emphasizes the importance of preventive medicine and seeks to reduce cancer and lifestyle-related diseases such as diabetes and/or cardiovascular diseases, thus ensuring a long and healthy life for its citizens. Also, the Agenda aims to reduce the level of smoking and increase the healthcare system's readiness to deal with epidemics and health risks. The core aim is to elevate UAE to be one of the lead countries in terms of quality of healthcare by the year 2021.

The UAE is intensifying its fight against lifestyle diseases. Early intervention and adoption of changes to lifestyle habits can dramatically enhance citizens' prospects for a better quality of life. The UAE has issued food safety law which establishes key requirements for an effective system to ensure the protection of citizen's public health.

NEED

To develop a comprehensive program on healthy lifestyles and preventive care to provide the best environment for the people of the UAE's happiness.

IDEA

The UAE's goal is to be the leading country in the healthcare field by providing its people with world-class healthcare. This would improve their quality of life and well-being.

In 2016, the UAE Government had allocated 7.9 percent of the budget, up to AED 3.83 billion for the health sector alone. In 2017, the UAE Government allocated 8.6 percent of the federal budget to the health sector; this was in addition to the significant spending by the local Emirates. According to the Sustainable Economic Development Assessment (SEDA) scores from the Boston Consulting Group (BCG), healthcare standards in the UAE outperformed regional and worldwide averages on multiple dimensions such as wellbeing and education.

As per 2014 statistics released by Federal Statistics and Competitive Authority, there were 79 hospitals, 10,165 physicians and 16,882 nurses in the private sector with 36 hospitals, 6,504 physicians and 16,547 nurses in the government sector.

To provide better healthcare services and to ease access to health facilities, the UAE opened healthcare cities. These are complexes having clinics of various specialties.

PROJECTS AND INITIATIVES

In October 2018, The Ministry of Health and Prevention conducted various activities which aimed to raise awareness about the importance of eating healthy food choices and leading healthy lifestyle for employees and community groups within its hospitals and medical centres including Ibrahim bin Hamad Obaidullah, Fujairah, Al Baraha, Khorfakkan, Shaam, and Kalba Hospitals, as well as Al Ma'mura, Hamidiya, Al Zait, Riffa, Salamah, Al Khazan health centres and Physiotherapy centre in Ras Al Khaimah.¹

Raising awareness of what a healthy lifestyle can do in improving the lives of the people of the UAE is the first step towards having a population that understands the value of eating healthy, exercising and keep their mental health. This will lead to fewer people getting sick in the country, reducing the cost of healthcare and allowing the people to live longer and more active lifestyles, which connects with the UAE's happiness motto.

The UAE Government launched three national initiatives, during the Wellbeing Working Group meeting, which took place under the UAE Government Annual Meetings. The initiatives include establishing the UAE Wellbeing Model for Residential Communities, in line with the government's directives that aim to promote wellbeing in the society. It also recommended the implementation of the Community Wellbeing Nutrition Program, and the adoption of the Community Program for Active Lifestyle, which would encourage community members to exercise.²

¹ <https://www.khaleejtimes.com/news/uae-health/uae-ministry-promotes-healthy-food-choices-lifestyle>

² <https://www.mocaf.gov.ae/en/media/news/uae-government-launches-three-3-to-promote-wellbeing>

These national initiatives tackled the complete individual and provided a support system to assist individuals in the quest to remain healthy. One cannot live a healthy lifestyle without a good support system in the community, at home and within the individual's own mental and physical beliefs

“The UAE Wellbeing Model for Residential Communities initiative aims to set an Emirati model for designing and developing societies and residential communities across the country to promote happiness and wellbeing. This is achieved by adopting the happiness and wellbeing principles and requirements in the design and planning process, setting a mechanism to evaluate societies and design cities based on the pillars and key requirements of happiness and wellbeing.

The Community Wellbeing Nutrition Program initiative will promote wellbeing by establishing standards for consumers, manufacturers and suppliers, in addition to implementing a set of motivational and educational community programs and activities on nutrition for all segments of the society.

The Community Program for Active Lifestyle seeks to establish a national program that promotes wellbeing by encouraging the different segments of society to exercise and improve their lifestyle. It further aims to avail the UAE public and covered facilities to community members, and work on increasing their numbers and developing them.”³

The following are the programs and initiatives that currently exist in the UAE that have a substantive impact on the population:

- **Free screening for early detection of breast cancer**

Ministry of Health and Prevention (MoHaP) encourages all women in the UAE, nationals, and residents, to go for free screenings for the early detection of breast cancer.

³ <https://www.mocaf.gov.ae/en/media/news/uae-government-launches-three-3-to-promote-wellbeing>

It launched a campaign between May-June 2017, with the use of mobile clinics equipped with mammography technology which were deployed to several shopping centers in Dubai and the Northern Emirates.

The campaign aimed to raise public awareness on the importance of early detection of breast cancer, diagnosis, treatment, and rehabilitation.

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- **Prevention of non-communicable diseases**

The UAE's MoHaP developed the eEtmenan application to assist in the prevention of non-communicable diseases. This launch falls in line with the Ministry's efforts to develop a national strategy to combat non-communicable diseases over the next five years (2017 – 2021) as a means of promoting a healthier lifestyle and curb related diseases.

- **The Health Heroes app**

In 2016, the MoHaP launched the Health Heroes app, which aimed to provide children with new information that raised awareness on the importance of adopting a healthy lifestyle. The App is a part of the federal government strategy to reduce childhood obesity rates and promote preventive health behavior amongst children in the UAE. The Health Heroes app won first place in the 'Best Community Sport Initiative' competition.

- **Diabetes screening initiative**

As part of MoHaP's National Strategy for Fighting Diabetes (2009-2018), several different initiatives were launched aimed at reducing the prevalence of diabetes from 19.3 percent to 16.28 percent by 2021. The core emphasis was to place the patient at the center of diabetic management. Diabetes Screening and Professional Healthcare Education programs are one of the initiatives aimed at providing better medical care to diabetic patients.

- **Thiqa Program:** Under the 'Thiqa' program, Abu Dhabi Government provides full medical coverage for all UAE nationals living in Abu Dhabi. Citizens get a Thiqa card, through which they get complete access to a large number of private and public healthcare providers registered within Daman's network. It is also inclusive of broader geographical coverage and additional health benefits.
- **Saada:** Is a health insurance program for the citizens in the emirate of Dubai. It provides insurance coverage to citizens who do not currently benefit from any government health program in the emirate of Dubai. The program provides treatment through a large network of healthcare providers in the private sector and DHA healthcare centers. Citizens' Emirates ID card carries details of the Saada program they are subscribed to.
- **Weqaya Screening:** The UAE nationals living in Abu Dhabi, who are 18 to 75 years old need to undergo the Weqaya screening run by the Department of Health (Abu Dhabi). The health check is done to identify cardiovascular risk factors, which may be waived only in exceptional cases.
- **Free Vaccines:**

The UAE Government regularly announces campaigns under which it offers free vaccines to citizens and residents. In September 2016, citizens and residents between the ages of 19 and 34 were offered free MMR vaccines to prevent the spread of measles, mumps, and rubella.

- **Food Atlas**

Abu Dhabi Food Centre Authority (ADFCA) launched the Food Atlas initiative in conjunction with the Department of Health - Abu Dhabi, Abu Dhabi Health Services Company, Abu Dhabi Quality, and Conformity Council and Environment Agency-Abu Dhabi.

Food Atlas includes a guide for readers to identify how much food is too much to eat, and the nutritional value of the portion consumed. The atlas includes 150 international and local foods and forms the basis for a larger plan that will look at chronic diseases, nutrition, water consumption, and food security in the UAE.

International Initiatives

Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum Global Initiatives (MBGRI)

Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum Global Initiatives combats the root causes of poverty and disease worldwide. It has helped millions of people.

Al Jalila Foundation

The Al Jalila Foundation is a global non-profit organization established in 2013 to improve human quality of life through the promotion of education and research in medical fields. It targets common health problems in the region such as cancer, heart and circulatory diseases, diabetes, obesity and mental disease. It achieves its goal by supporting leading medical research efforts and providing scholarship grants to educate a national team of professional medical caregivers.

Nour Dubai

Nour Dubai Founded in 2010, this institution was based on the principle that everyone has the right to lead a healthy life and that "everyone has the right to enjoy eyesight". In cooperation with international partners, it aims at paving the way for a world free of the causes of blindness and visual disabilities through the provision of treatment, preventive and educational programs that treat and prevent blindness and visual impairment in developing countries on both the regional and global levels.

Emirates Red Crescent (ERC)

Since its establishment in 1983, ERC has been playing a leading role in promoting different aspects of humanitarian work on both domestic and international levels, regardless of ethnic, cultural, geographic or religious considerations. In 2001, ERC was selected as the second best humanitarian authority in Asia.

Emirates Polio campaign

The Emirates Polio campaign for polio eradication, under the directives of H. H. Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan, President of the UAE, supports healthcare programs in Pakistan that bring epidemics under control and prevent and negate the health hazards that can affect children in these areas.

IMPACT

As of 2015, Mohammed Bin Rashid Al Maktoum Global Initiatives have assisted 40 million people in 99 countries. These programs protected 3.6 million children from intestinal worms, built 46 hospitals and provided 1.5 million households with support. Mohammed Bin Rashid Al Maktoum Global Initiatives will reach more than 130 million people in the coming 10 years and will focus on developmental and relief efforts across the Arab region and beyond, following a clear and comprehensive vision and a specific set of major, measurable goals and milestones.

Between 1971 and 2014, the UAE disbursed AED 2 billion on projects associated with children's health, education and relief efforts in Asia-Pacific and Africa. Some of these programs focused on vaccinating children against polio and measles with a special focus on children in Pakistani and Afghanistan. The UAE Government's 2013 has pledged of AED 440 million for supporting global efforts to put the world over the finish line for polio eradication, especially in Pakistan, which has one of the world's highest rates of polio infection.

From January 2014 to May 2016, through the Emirates Polio campaign, the UAE provided 116,177,794 million polio vaccines to Pakistani children aged under five. The Emirates Polio campaign supports the WHO's Global Polio Eradication Initiative (GPEI) aimed at eradicating polio by the end of 2018 as well as Pakistani Government's National Emergency Action Plan to wipe out the polio virus.

In 2011, H. H. Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Deputy Supreme Commander of the UAE Armed Forces and Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation committed USD\$ 100 million (USD\$ 50 million each) for the purchase and delivery of vital vaccines to prevent diseases and save the lives of Afghani and Pakistani children.

In June 2017, H. H. Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan made a personal donation of USD\$ 30 million to support global efforts to eradicate polio. The donation supported GPEI activities such as vaccination and disease monitoring, which will protect more than 450 million children from polio each year. His Highness' contribution to the initiative is part of the UAE's continued collaboration with the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, which provides humanitarian and healthcare services to millions of people around the globe.

Between 2008 and 2013, through its various educational programs, Noor Dubai has educated 1,058,522 individuals and treated about 1,126,977 people and prevented about 4 million cases of River blindness. The programs have prevented and treated blindness for 23 million people and provided 81 million vaccines and medications in the past eight years. To date, the initiative has provided 77,000,000 doses of medicines, 364 thousand surgeries, training 241 thousand individuals around 22 countries.

As a result of the international initiatives, millions of people globally have been cured of blindness, polio, blood and heart ailments, and many other diseases.

UAE has made great strides to achieve Sustainable Development Goal no 3: Good Health and Well-Being, utilizing and investing its resources and sources to achieve this goal. UAE and the citizens have worked closely together to elevate the UAE to be one of the best countries in the field of health and welfare.

The local initiatives results helped to increase average healthy life expectancy to 68.3 years,

increase the ranking in Healthcare Quality Index to rank 25, decrease in the number of deaths from cardiovascular diseases per 100,000 population to 82 deaths, increase in the number of physicians per 1000 population to 2.43, increase number of nurses per 1000 population to 5.68, decrease the percentage of obesity amongst children to 13.69%, decrease the number of deaths from cancer per 100,000 population to 26.4 deaths and increase in the percentage of accredited health facilities to 78.64%.

The UAE already achieved some of the sustainable development goals and will continue its efforts to combat diseases around the world.

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