

#ArabHealth 2015: Middle East Healthcare Industry is Engine of Growth



Constraints in healthcare supply offer opportunities for public-private-partnerships as Arab Health Exhibition & Congress 2015 brings together diverse platform of regional and global markets

The GCC's healthcare market has experienced stable growth in the past years, driven by a growing ageing demographic and increased healthcare expenditure per capita. The rising demand of healthcare services paired with restricted supply of healthcare solutions has resulted in governments across the GCC implementing new technologies, systems of care, and considering further partnerships with international healthcare providers. GCC governments continue to invest to modernise and reform its healthcare systems, as well as promote economic diversification in the region. This year's Arab Health Exhibition & Congress reflects the existing opportunities for the healthcare industry as an engine of growth for GCC economies.

According to Ryder Smith, Middle East Health Industries Leader, PwC, in order to address the growing demand for healthcare services there is action needed. "The UAE, along with other countries in the Middle East, must look to more innovative approaches. These will likely involve historically non-traditional participants in the healthcare delivery system, such as technology, telecomms and retail companies, to effectively serve overall healthcare service needs. The expected growth in the healthcare market will not only boost GDP, it can also help the UAE and the oil-rich states to diversify."

As a result of demographic trends and the increase demand for healthcare services, governments across the GCC have focused on developing healthcare infrastructure and implementing policies to address healthcare concerns. A key trend in the industry has been the adoption of technologies to streamline healthcare systems. Such technologies include the adoption eVisits, digitalisation and electronic management of patient records. The market for such technologies represents a viable opportunity for private entities to capture the gap in the market. Services such as eVisits represent a market of \$2-3 billion according to a recent report by Deloitte[1].

Recent efforts to integrate technology and the healthcare sector have proven successful in countries such as the UAE and Saudi Arabia. Programmes such as KSA's Integrated and Comprehensive Health Programme, connecting more than 3,500 healthcare facilities; and the UAE's agreement with telecoms providers Etisalat and Du to cover various mHealth products and services pave the way for further innovative approaches to healthcare in the region.

Events such as Arab Health are vital to the evolution of the industry as a platform to identify existing and emergent opportunities in the region. "As we look to the future, in order to maintain financially sustainable and accessible healthcare systems, a whole-economy approach is essential. By bringing together such a large group of industry experts including healthcare providers, regulators, technology and solution providers, and investors, among others, Arab Health helps facilitate the exchange of information and highlight potential investment opportunities," said Mr Smith added.

Simon Page, Managing Director, Informa Life Sciences Exhibition, said: "Arab Health is in ideal platform to support the flow of capital and critical knowledge in the healthcare industry. This year we have seen the introduction of technologies such as Siemens Healthcare's digital mobile X-ray system and 1.5-tesla MRI scanner with reduced operating costs and the announcement of new programmes, such as the Dubai Health Authority's roll out of four medical tourism packages. The introduction of new technologies to the region and the development of partnerships help strengthen Dubai's position as a healthcare hub in the Middle East and reflect the opportunities for growth of the industry in the region."

As one of the key players in the diagnostics industry, Abbott is at Arab Health to showcase their solutions for the Middle East: "Abbott is designing the next generation of diagnostics solutions to help health care providers in the Middle East achieve faster and more accurate test results. We are accomplishing this by delivering innovative systems and technologies, such as our ARCHITECT STAT High Sensitive Troponin-I (hsTnI) test to aid doctors in evaluating heart attacks, which may allow doctors in the Middle East to reduce the time to diagnosis and treatment by several hours when compared to standard troponin tests. At Arab Health, this year, we will be featuring a number of these innovations," said Jaime Contreras, Senior Vice President, Core Laboratory Diagnostics, Commercial Operations, Abbott.

PwC highlighted that for Governments in the UAE and the region to cope with hyper growth in the healthcare industry, they need to implement alternative delivery models including but not limited to public-private partnerships (PPPs). "PPPs establish a long term contractual arrangement between public and private entities where the skills and assets of the private sector are utilised by the public sector to deliver services and/or infrastructure to the general public. These types of partnerships can help address capacity problems facing health systems across the region including the lack of essential infrastructure, the lack of investment capital, workforce shortages, and the variable quality of the services provided. Additionally, through the introduction of competition, well managed PPPs can help improve efficiency while shifting some risk away from governments. While the track record of PPPs in the region is somewhat uneven, both regulators and the private sector are keenly aware of the potential and my expectation is these partnerships will accelerate and deepen," said Mr Smith.

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Arab Health Exhibition & Congress hosts 4000 international and regional exhibiting companies and more than 120,000 attendees over four days (26-29 January 2015) at the Dubai International Convention and Exhibition Center.

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