

Dubai aims to be world leader in push for genome medicine



Dubai's 10X Initiative seeks to place the emirate and its government entities 10 years ahead of the rest of the world in all sectors. It is in this context that the Dubai Health Authority (DHA) has announced plans for an ambitious project aimed at helping predict the future of human health. The "Human Genome Project" entails the creation of genetics laboratories to enhance knowledge in genetic medicine and the establishment of a national genetic databank.

The Genome project aims to perfect gene scanning to detect changes in the genes, chromosomes, and proteins that can lead to genetic diseases. Ultimately, the objective is to help researchers and medical experts prevent chronic diseases and cancer, thus reducing the financial burden for treating chronic diseases, in addition to slowing down the ageing process.

"Forming genome laboratories in Dubai signals a new phase, where our forecasts for the future of the health and medical services sector begin to materialise," said Humaid Mohammed Al Qatami, chairman and director general of the DHA.

The genetics labs will establish the first national genetic database for future research, lending support to decision-makers as they set plans and strategies for the future of the healthcare sector, Al Qatami explained. "This, in turn, ensures Dubai's global competitiveness and strengthens the knowledge economy," he added.

To ensure seamless implementation of the project, the DHA is dedicating ample resources and efforts by mandating a number of its affiliate organisations to carry out its execution, such as the Department of Pathology & Genetics, and the Dubai Cord Blood and Research Centre (DCRC). In addition, the DHA has formed a committee of genetics experts, drawn from prominent international studies and experiments, and outlined potential challenges and solutions to overcome them.

"The authority is looking to target all residents of the emirate of Dubai, focusing on UAE nationals in the first phase of implementation. The project's timetable extends over 24 months, during which we will be collecting samples, analysing DNA sequences, and recording the results in the data bank," said Al Qatami.

The next phase of the project involves automated learning and artificial intelligence to issue reports that support research, forecast future disorders and epidemics, and plan preventive measures, he explained.

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