

Arab Health 2017: UAE Healthcare Updates

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Speaking at the Healthcare Business Forum held during Arab Health, Dr Ramadan Al Blooshi, the Chief Executive Officer of Dubai Healthcare City Authority, highlighted the freezone's regulations alongside legal seminars discussing how UAE regulatory and licensing frameworks offer a positive opportunity for business.

A highlight of the Leaders in Healthcare Conference held during Arab Health was HRH Princess Haya bint Al Hussein's presentation concerning the commitment of the UAE government to improving population health and boosting medical tourism by having the latest state-of-the-art healthcare services available. Other future-looking themes included the delivery of personalised medicine, the use of drones to deliver blood samples and blood products in remote locations, and enhancing medical outcomes through 3D medical printing. Funding for innovating technology was also highlighted as a focus of the UAE, with presentations from those currently based in the region who are using crowd sourced frameworks to launch new innovations in healthcare.

On the back of Arab Health, a number of new initiatives and changes to healthcare regulations and practices are typically announced. Below, we provide a few UAE healthcare industry updates and predictions for 2017.

Ministry of Health and Prevention Updates Fees

The Ministry of Health and Prevention has changed their fees for certain services following the issuance of a 2016 decree. While a number of fees remain the same, several new fees have been added, such as an AED 500 fee for the classification of a product. Such classification requests are used to determine whether the product in question will be regulated by the Ministry or must be submitted to another authority, if applicable, for registration prior to importation.

These fees have been changed as of 29th January 2017. Of particular interest are the following fees:

- For the registration or renewal of registration for a medical products manufacturer: AED 10,000
- Registration of a new General Sale List product: AED 5,000
- Registration of new medical device product: AED 2,500
- Request for classification of product: AED 500

In addition to these fees, each certificate issued may be charged an AED 1,000 issuing fee along with the service payment. This does not apply to classification requests, however.

Ministry of Health and Prevention Updates Classification Guidelines

The Ministry of Health and Prevention, in addition to now charging AED 500 for a classification of medical products request, has updated their classification guidelines to make the classification procedures clearer and more efficient. For products having varying sizes, one classification request can be submitted for all sizes. On the other hand, each item in a First Aid set will be considered as a separate item for classification. Further, it has been the Ministry's practice recently, but has now been confirmed in the guidelines, that products for dental healthcare professional use, if they are of the same type, will be considered as one item for classification. Yet, dental cements, fillers, etc. will be considered as each a single item.

Dubai Health Authority Focuses on 3D Printing

During Arab Health, the Dubai Health Authority ('DHA') demonstrated its prioritisation of fostering the development of future technologies, such as 3D printing in healthcare. The DHA held roundtable discussions and showcased interactive demonstrations of 3D models to Arab Health visitors. The focus of DHA's initiative is to create meaningful discussion and action concerning the three core pillars of 3D printing: awareness, regulation and implementation.

Dubai Healthcare City Authority Undergoes Updates

The Dubai Healthcare City Authority - Regulatory ('DHCR') announced a new e-services platform, Masaar, designed to improve the ease of doing business in the Dubai Healthcare City ('DHCC'). The platform is designed to be a one-stop e-services system offering comprehensive applicant services, including commercial set-ups, renewals, healthcare professional and clinical licensing, as well as other governmental services.

Predictions for 2017

While the region is expecting to see healthcare spending increases, the market must also improve operational efficiency for clinical and administrative services. We see providers undertaking:

- cost containment measures and the use of financial modelling and data analytics to drive better value of services and to be more efficient;
- feasibility studies to review consolidation with partners, merger and acquisition activity;
- revenue diversification, unbundling of services and moving to retail centres, and community or home-based care, with increased use of tele-health services as these activities become better regulated and the 'norm' as the first line of options for patients;
- standardisation of processes, policies, and organisational frameworks to better coordinate and deliver services and use resources more efficiently;
- more investment in prevention and health education promotion programmes and campaigns;
- further public private partnership; and
- the use of innovative technology, artificial intelligence, point-of-care diagnostics, and the offering of biosensors and trackers to patients.

The healthcare sector is a highly regulated space. Increased regulation is inevitable in an emerging market where global providers compete to introduce new services, medicines, and devices. Regulators can learn from other jurisdictions, but this is not a one-size-fits-all solution. Local, cultural, demographic, and geographical considerations dictate the need for bespoke solutions in the healthcare industry, which will continue to present challenges for all stakeholders.

Al Tamimi & Company's Healthcare Practice Group regularly advises the healthcare industry clients ranging from medical products providers to hospitals and healthcare private equity firms. For further

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