

## Article

# Value over Volume: Maximizing Resources by Prioritizing Value: The Dubai Healthcare Experience

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## ABSTRACT

The mission of the Dubai Health Authority is to transform healthcare delivery by fostering innovative and integrated care models and enhancing community engagement. The Authority's programs are designed to move the emirate's healthcare system forward by being mutually supportive, constituency inclusive, accountable and outcomes-based. Dubai's healthcare policy leadership has adopted a strategy to drive and ensure compliance and accountability through an innovative health governance framework. At its core, Dubai's healthcare strategy begins with its Care Model Innovation Program. This key initiative is designed to promote innovation and efficiency and ensure that Dubai residents (citizens) and visitors (non-citizen residents) have access to high quality services across the continuum of care.

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## INTRODUCTION

**D**UBAI IS OFTEN known as the “home of superlatives:” the biggest malls, the tallest building, the newest technologies. But the most important (and often unrecognized) local trait is speed to best practice implementation. In more Western parlance, the emirate isn't just about indoor skiing in searing summer heat. It's public policy action. Consider Dubai's healthcare delivery system. The emirate talks the talk and walks the walk. Mandatory health insurance was enacted in 2014 requiring that by 2016 every employee and dependent residing in Dubai must be medically insured.<sup>1</sup> Four years later, close to 100% of Dubai's population is now covered and have financial access to health care. (See Figure 1) And it's not just about a speed trophy – the results are also impressive.

The mission of the Dubai Health Authority is to transform healthcare delivery by fostering innovative and integrated care models and enhancing community engagement. The Authority's three goals (see Figure 2)

are designed to move the emirate's healthcare system forward by being mutually supportive, constituency inclusive, accountable and outcomes-based.

The Authority strives to reach these goals through six core values:

1. Customer centricity
2. Efficiency
3. Engaged and motivated workforce
4. Accountability and transparency
5. Innovation
6. Excellence

Dubai's healthcare policy leadership has adopted a strategy to drive and ensure compliance and accountability through an innovative health governance framework. At its core, Dubai's healthcare strategy begins with its Care Model Innovation Program. This key initiative is designed to promote innovation and efficiency and ensure that Dubai residents (citizens) and visitors (non-citizen residents) have access to high quality services across the continuum of care.

## Evolution of private insurance landscape has been driven by mandatory insurance coverage across Dubai and Abu Dhabi

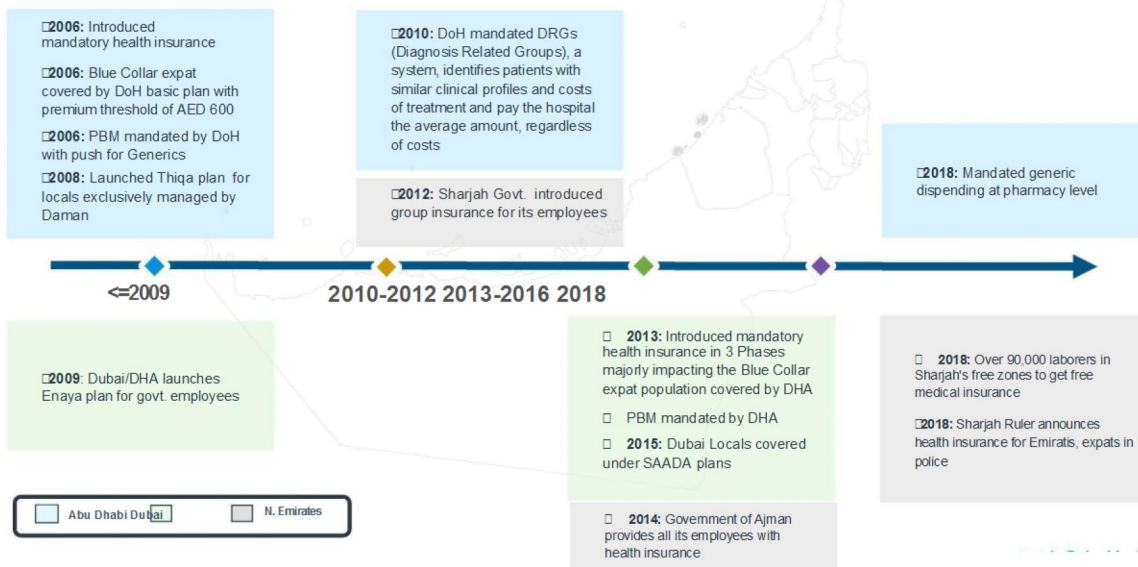


Figure 1



Figure 2

The strategy introduces innovative care models to fill existing care delivery gaps and enable an integrated cost-effective, patient and innovation-oriented care delivery system.

Dubai's Care Model Innovation design contains ten distinct aspects:

1. Develop and implement a strategy for special-needs patients
2. Innovate in the delivery of ambulatory surgery
3. Introduce and promote the use of telemedicine solutions

4. Introduce innovative medical technologies in the provision of healthcare services
5. Promote innovation culture
6. Enhance home and remote care
7. Reinforce the use of patient engagement tools
8. Develop pharma interventions to provide solutions beyond the pill
9. Innovate in the delivery of rehabilitation care
10. Innovate in the delivery

## VALUE OVER VOLUME

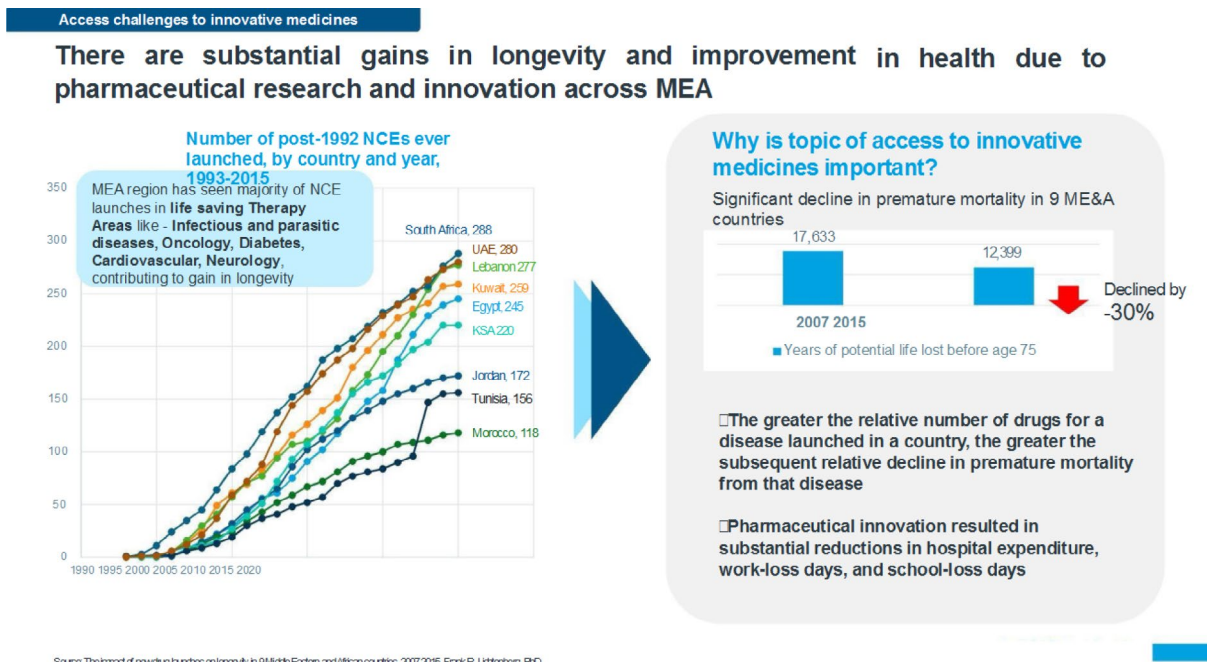
At DUPHAT 2021 (the largest pharmaceutical event in Middle East and Africa)<sup>2</sup>, Dr. Mohamed Farghaly (head of the Dubai Health Authority’s insurance medical regulation department) outlined both the strategic implications and tactical realities of pharmaceutical costs on Dubai’s health insurance system. The key “red thread” of his presentation was “value over volume” – that cost, while receiving the lion’s share of healthcare headlines, is only one of many above the line variables with value (defined as positive patient outcomes) the driving “bottom line” denominator of the healthcare equation. (See Figure 3).

Dr. Farghaly began his presentation by making clear what volume-based cost-containment options were off the table: Brand-to-generic substitution at point of dispensation (pharmacies) and non-medical switching from

brand to generic drugs or innovator biologics to biosimilars, mandatory step therapy, or in any way interfering with a physician’s authority to practice medicine as she sees fit for any given patient. According to Dr. Farghaly, empowered physicians deliver better results and, hence, greater value to both their patients and the healthcare system in Dubai.

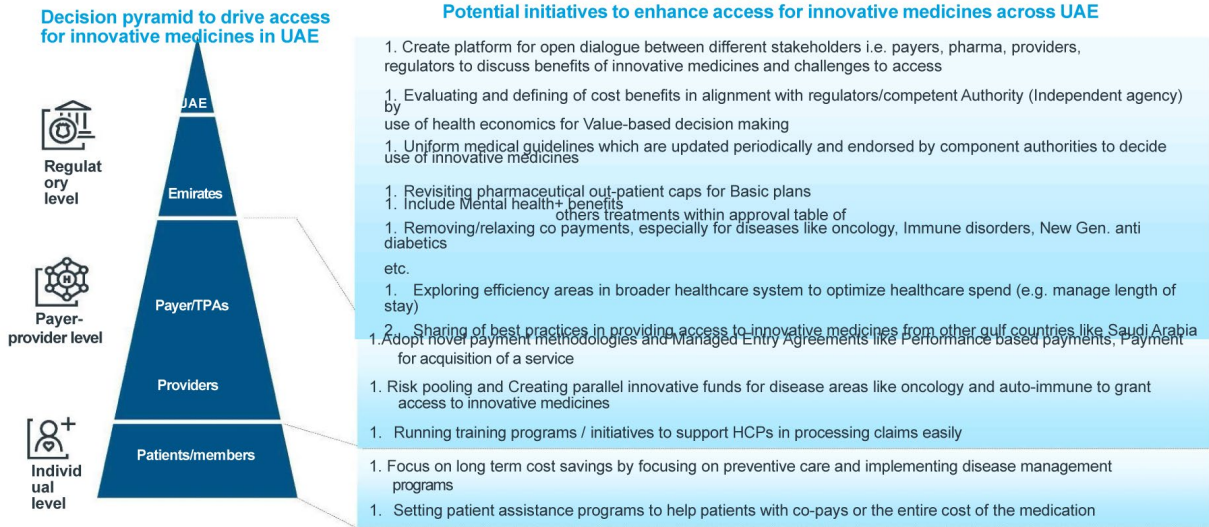
In a recent study of German cardiologists<sup>3</sup>, researchers found that more than 14% of physicians in the quantitative study and over one third of physicians in the qualitative study chose not to participate in a government-initiated cardiology program because of concerns related to freedom – especially out of fear for their own professional autonomy as such or in relation to prescription regulations as well as the patients’ free choice of medical practitioners. As one physician commented, “I think professional autonomy is heavily threatened here by the cardiology program.” They especially perceived an emergence of unilateral dependence instead of cooperation. This is likely based on the imbalance of power within the program.

Research from other national programs reinforce the concept of rewarding positive patient outcomes versus tertiary savings based on formulary restrictions and impinging upon the prescribing authority of a physician.<sup>4</sup> A disempowered physician is likely to provide fewer medical services – including more aggressive use of innovative medical technologies, including diagnostics, devices and therapeutics. The increasing pressure of



**Figure 3**

## Several initiatives have been considered to enhance access for innovative medicines across UAE



Source: IQVIA market research & discussions with stakeholders

Figure 4

non-medical budgetary constraints has a direct impact on the value of any given healthcare provider’s lifetime of experience and hands-on patient contact.

Another foundational concept that is helping to propel the UAE’s healthcare system forward is open, honest and regular communications with the various parts of their healthcare ecosystem. (See Figure 4).

An important lesson is that dialogue counts. The UAE has been particularly good at managing an open-door policy with the innovative biopharmaceutical sector, maintaining a good dialogue with the industry on policies that could affect patients or the sector. And this extends to the emirate level, with Abu Dhabi setting up a new industry-government Advisory Council to collaborate on policies to boost investment, employment and innovation in the sector.<sup>5</sup> As per Dr. Farghaly, achieving “value over volume” is contingent on driving timely positive patient outcomes – and that’s a team effort. “Value” as the denominator of the healthcare equation demands that multiple voices be heard – and heeded.

## LESSONS LEARNED FROM THE COVID-19 EXPERIENCE

“Value over Volume” recognizes that, when it comes to advancing the public health, whether in the East, West or the Gulf Peninsula – we are all in this together. Get

ready world, the “Gulf Tiger” is poised for global leadership in the smart and savvy delivery of cost-effective, patient-focused healthcare.

## ENDNOTES

1. <https://medicalinsurance.ae/wp-content/uploads/Health-Insurance-Law-English.pdf> Last accessed April 29, 2021.
2. <https://duphat.ae/conference-program-2021/> Last accessed April 29, 2021.
3. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7693876/> Last accessed April 29, 2021.
4. [https://scholar.google.com/scholar?q=Researches+ab+out+improving+patient+care+and+outcomes&hl=en&as\\_sdt=0&as\\_vis=1&oi=scholart](https://scholar.google.com/scholar?q=Researches+ab+out+improving+patient+care+and+outcomes&hl=en&as_sdt=0&as_vis=1&oi=scholart) Last accessed April 29, 2021.
5. <https://bpace.buid.ac.ae/handle/1234/625> Last accessed April 29, 2021.