

## Chapter 4

# The Healthcare Strategic Practice in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates

Ahmad Al Balkhi  
Tawam Hospital, UAE

### ABSTRACT

*This chapter aims to review the healthcare strategies in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) with a special focus on the Emirate of Abu Dhabi. The chapter starts with an introduction to the adopted strategic planning of health sector in the UAE. Then it provides the theoretical background to the subject, outlines the persisting health issues and concerns, in addition to the main challenges of health planning in the United Arab Emirates. This will be followed by an overview of the current health system and regulations in the UAE, and will elaborate on the adopted health strategies, and upon that will suggest solutions and tips that can help in overcoming challenges and resolving critical issues. The review concludes with recommendation for future researches that could expand the scope of this review to be more comprehensive and focused on the strategic option for achieving excellence in the healthcare sector.*

### INTRODUCTION

The United Arab Emirates (UAE), a member country of the GCC, is a confederation of seven emirates; Abu Dhabi (the capital), Dubai, Sharjah, Ras Al Khaimah, Fujairah, Umm Al Quwain and Ajman. The population of the UAE has reached nearly 9.2 million, predominantly expatriates, representing multiple different nationalities, languages and cultures. The UAE nationals account for about 19% of the total population (Nair, Ibrahim and Celentano, 2013). The per capita income in UAE is among the top ten countries of the world according to the World Bank report (2017). The country's prosperity and economic superiority has followed the discovery of oil and natural gas almost forty-five years ago. Interestingly, despite the spike in the number of publications in recent years, the government has not been successful in addressing public health and the business of healthcare (Colliers International, 2017).

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-5225-8048-5.ch004

Abu Dhabi being the capital of the UAE and the largest of the seven emirates in terms of land mass and population, comprises three geographical regions: the Central Capital District, the Eastern Region, and the Western Region. The health system in Abu Dhabi has been regulated by the Health Authority of Abu Dhabi (HAAD), which it was recently renamed the Department of Health (DOH) and it has been provided by the Abu Dhabi Health Services Company (SEHA) since 2007. Although enjoying descent levels of quality health services, the UAE suffered from high population-burden of morbidity and mortality related to chronic diseases (Paulo, Loney and Lapão, 2017).

In 2010, the government launched the UAE Vision 2021, with the aim to make the UAE among the best countries in the world by the Golden Jubilee of the Union, marking the 50 years anniversary of the creation of the UAE. Furthermore, the Government of Abu Dhabi announced a long-term plan for the transformation of the emirate's economy, in-line with the UAE leadership vision, and Abu Dhabi Economic Vision 2030 plan. Abu Dhabi Executive Council has set targets to promote the efficiency of the health system in Abu Dhabi, in order to match the levels of global standards so that healthcare could be identified as one of the key strategic pillars, with a vision to position Abu Dhabi as a center of excellence and innovation in 'Healthcare SEHA, 2010, 2014)

The healthcare business tends to be more complex than other businesses and managing it is also more complex, according to Al Balkhi, (2016). He also suggests that leaders are responsible for the management of healthcare institution which are continuously confronted by increasing clients' needs and demands despite the limitations in the health organizations concerned.

It is important to point out that such leaders need to critically adopt and master effective leadership style and behaviors in order to success in today's intensive work environment with challenges, and to construct a balance between the competing demands. Al Balkhi (2016) also stated that the success of any organization depends on leaders' capability to optimize its human and non-human resources, and that an effective organization requires an effective leadership

Fundamentally, there is a need to identify the gaps the in UAE and Abu Dhabi healthcare facilities, and to develop a strategic plan for future healthcare services. Once the strategic opportunities have been recognized and potential dangers considered, a list of steps that will be taken to actualize the arrangement ought to be shaped.

The UAE, like other countries including advanced countries, has a number of challenges in the development of healthcare; thus strategies have been developed and implemented to improve the health sector especially in the Emirate of Abu Dhabi. Despite the fact that some of these strategies have been implemented and have contributed to develop the health sector, but it is still in need for substantial improvement and still needs more improvements.

## **BACKGROUND**

Strategy developed from a practical need is a distinguishing factor between failure and success in many organizations (Haque et al., 2014; Haur et al., 2017). As suggested by Jim Clayton, (2018), the five stages of the strategy process are; goal-setting, analysis, strategy formation, strategy implementation and strategy monitoring. According to Doncho Donev et al, 2010 applying the most advanced health planning and programming methods combined with the improvement of health system organization and performance, represents permanent matters of concern for every country. An eminent example of the strategic approach is the well-known dialogue from the popular Lewis Carroll's Alice in the Wonderland:

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