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6 Key Trends Shaping GCC Healthcare Now

Inside the $135.5B Digital Transformation

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The healthcare sector in the GCC is advancing rapidly, with a strong emphasis on preventive care and healthcare technologies. Healthcare spending in the region is projected to reach US$135.5 billion by 2027, driven by innovations in AI, robotics, and digital health platforms. Here are the major trends that are reshaping healthcare in the GCC.

Artificial intelligence

AI already plays a crucial role in diagnostics and treatment at various healthcare facilities across the GCC. Robotics and AI are increasingly utilised in clinical procedures and in cardiac monitoring. In 2023, the UAE became the first country to appoint a Minister of AI, signalling its commitment to digital innovation. In 2022, Altib, the largest AI-based digital health platform in the Middle East, raised US$44 million to establish fully integrated primary care systems. By 2030, digital healthcare solutions are expected to generate between US$15 billion to US$27 billion in Saudi Arabia alone.

Precision, personalised, and preventive medicine

Advances in genomics are driving the evolution of precision medicine, enabling personalised treatments based on individual genetic profiles, lifestyles, and environmental factors. Genetic testing allows for the identification of patients at risk of specific diseases before symptoms appear, informing preventive approaches. This shift toward preventive care is central to improving long-term health outcomes. GCC countries such as Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE are investing heavily in genomic medicine.

Telemedicine and remote care

Telemedicine and remote care have grown rapidly, especially since the COVID-19 pandemic. The Seha Virtual Hospital in Saudi Arabia, which connects over 170 hospitals, enables patients in remote areas to access specialists. In Bahrain, smartphone platforms like BeAware and Sehati provide patients with virtual access to healthcare services. Similarly, in the UAE, Altibbi, the largest digital health platform in the region, has facilitated over five million telehealth consultations.

Value-based healthcare

With rising healthcare costs, the transition toward value-based care is gaining traction. This model emphasises delivering high-quality, cost-effective care, and incentivises outcomes rather than volume of services provided. Collaboration among healthcare stakeholders is vital, with data analytics playing a critical role in tracking outcomes, identifying gaps in care, and addressing healthcare disparities. Value-based reimbursement models have already been implemented in varying capacities across healthcare sectors in Saudi Arabia and the UAE.

Digital health solutions

In 2022, Saudi Arabia launched the largest health information exchange in the region, consolidating data from over 5,000 healthcare organisations to deliver more effective and timely care. In UAE, the digital twin project is leveraging virtual simulations of patient physiology to advance precision medicine and cancer care. By 2026, the combined digital health market in Saudi Arabia and the UAE is projected to reach US$4 billion.

Healthcare sustainability

addition to technological advancements, the healthcare sector is working to align with global sustainability goals. These efforts benefit the environment and can lead to long-term cost savings. The Abu Dhabi Department of Health aims to reduce carbon emissions by 20 per cent by 2030, with the ultimate goal of achieving net zero emissions by 2050. Similarly, Saudi Arabia is committed to reducing the carbon footprint of its healthcare sector through various sustainability initiatives.

Conclusion

The GCC healthcare sector is undergoing a transformation that combines the adoption of cutting-edge technology with the implementation of sustainable practices in healthcare. By integrating AI, genomics, telemedicine, and value-based care, the region is developing smarter healthcare systems that meet the dynamic needs of patients and address the complex healthcare challenges of the future.

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