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## Arab Health highlights family health shortfall



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A recent survey on healthcare habits of Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) residents suggests a lack of awareness of the benefits of visiting a general practitioner (GP) or family doctor. A GP is a medical doctor who treats acute and chronic illnesses, provides preventive care and health education to patients, and refers patients with serious conditions to a specialist.

However, as results of the survey show, GPs are commonly bypassed by GCC residents, with 41 percent of respondents preferring to go directly to a specialist when they fall ill. The survey commissioned by Arab Health 2018 – the largest exhibition for healthcare and trade professionals in the MENA region – was conducted by YouGov in December 2017, with over 2,700 participants from across the GCC.

Arab Health 2018 will welcome the first CME accredited Family Medicine conference for primary care practitioners interested in learning about the challenges and evidence-based medical interventions available.

Survey results also reveal that only 34 percent of respondents in the GCC visit a general practitioner. In countries with a long-standing healthcare system compared to the continuously developing industry in the GCC, patients tend to consult general practitioners as an initial touch point when feeling unwell and can visit the same family doctor over a long period of time for primary care.

Taking note of the data from the survey, primary care specialists urge GCC residents to consult general practitioners and avoid self-diagnosis.

"Family physicians possess unique attitudes, skills and knowledge, which qualify them to provide ongoing, comprehensive medical care to each member of the family. In addition to diagnosing and treating acute and chronic illnesses, family physicians provide routine health screenings and counselling on lifestyle changes in an effort to prevent illnesses before they develop," said Dr. Nahed Monsef, Director Health Affairs Department, Primary Health Care Services Sector, Dubai Health Authority (DHA).

Dr. Monsef explained that the "cornerstone of family medicine is an ongoing, personal patient-physician relationship focused on integrated care that provides optimal medical care by looking at the whole person, rather than focusing on just one organ system."

Commenting on the Family Medicine conference, Katie Briggs, Executive Director, Arab Health 2018 said: "The 43rd edition of Arab Health introduces a range of new conferences that focus on topics in the healthcare sector that are relevant for today's practitioners and patients. The Family Medicine conference will welcome an active panel of notable local and international experts in a wide range of medical areas, and will offer attendees a unique opportunity to engage in stimulating discussions and an opportunity to exchange experiences and expertise in this important field."

Source: Arab Health  
Image Credit: Arab Health

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