
UAE to Pioneer the Region's First Virtual Hospital



A major telecommunications provider is in talks with the UAE government to provide virtual hospital services in the region.

Du, which provides commercial Internet and entertainment services to customers across the UAE, revealed the proposed collaboration following the Arab Health conference in January, where both parties signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU). Under this framework, Du will begin development on a variety of virtual health services, including a dedicated telemedicine application.

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"Signing the MOU with Du comes in line with our relentless efforts to keep abreast of and harness the latest international technologies," said Abdul Rahman Bin Mohammed Al Owais, the country's Minister for Health and Prevention. "It is also to support our leadership ambitions to transform itself into a smart government and strengthen the UAE's leading position as a global hub for smart solutions. We will offer a new generation of sophisticated healthcare services."

Although neither party were able to provide definitive details of how the service will work at this stage, Marwan Bin Dalmook, a senior executive at Du, reinforced the need for such a project.

"Right now, anyone who experiences the slightest discomfort immediately checks in to the emergency section of a hospital, placing great burden on the hospital resources," he said February. "Virtual hospitals step in to address this problem by helping the patient get in touch with specialists anywhere in the world the moment he feels unwell."

The Benefits of Virtual Health

Although the service will be the first to offer full health facilities in the UAE, telemedicine is not new to the region. The Abu Dhabi Telemedicine Centre has been offering [24/7 remote medical consultations](#) since 2014, while a joint venture between Allianz Care and Orient Insurance has been catering for international health insurance patients since September last year.

However, the prospect of a full virtual hospital creates the possibility of a whole raft of new opportunities, including the implementation of robotics, artificial intelligence, and even remote surgery. This is positive news for healthcare providers – especially overstretched ER departments – while patients can gain access to world-class medical care from the convenience of their homes. Clinicians can obtain data from smart monitors in real-time and communicate with patients through specialist devices, ensuring that efficient diagnosis and treatment are not compromised.

There are other factors, too; travel costs for referred patients can accumulate, while [the spread of Covid-19](#) is a timely reminder of one of the less-heralded benefits of virtual healthcare – namely such a system can help to mitigate exposure by ensuring that patients do not need to physically present in an environment where the risk factor is high.

A launch date for the service has not yet been confirmed, but Bin Dalmook is optimistic that more details will be available soon. "The modalities, cost and infrastructure are all being worked out," he added. "We hope to get it in place soon."

Source: [Healthcare IT News](#)

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