



# Why UAE Medical Tourism Is on the Up

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According to information published by the Dubai Chamber of Commerce and Industry, medical tourism in the UAE increased by 5.5% between 2017 and 2018. Last year, total revenue from the industry reached a new record high of Dh12.1 billion, while Emirati health expenditure also increased 5.4% to Dh50.3 billion, marking a bumper year for the industry.

The success of the medical tourism sector is believed to be due to a number of reasons, including government initiatives geared towards boosting interest in Emirati healthcare from overseas patients and increased privatisation of the industry. Here's a quick rundown of some of the factors contributing towards the UAE's medical tourism success:

- **The Dubai Health Experience (DHX).** The first of its kind, the DHX is a medical tourism portal which allows tourists to book all of the treatments they wish to take advantage of before they even arrive in the country.
- **The Abu Dhabi Medical Tourism e-portal.** This digital platform is a collaboration between the Abu Dhabi Department of Health and the Abu Dhabi Department of Culture and Tourism. It allows visitors to view at a glance all of the available services and facilities in the UAE capital prior to touching down on Emirati soil.
- **Positioning itself as global leader.** Last month, Abu Dhabi hosted the World Medical Tourism and Global Healthcare Congress, cementing its reputation as one of the most advanced countries in the world when it comes to medical tourism.
- **More hospitals.** Opening up the healthcare industry to privatisation has allowed the construction of more hospitals. In 2013, there was just 107 hospitals in the country. Last year, that figure had shot up to 154.
- **Specialists in a range of treatments.** Dubai commands an excellent reputation in a number of different medical fields, including dentistry, dermatology, fertility treatment, orthopaedics, skin care and sports medicine.
- **Shortages elsewhere.** Several countries around the world – [including the UK](#) – have been experiencing unprecedented shortages in popular drugs and medicines for a variety of illnesses and purposes, including contraceptive pills, diabetes medication and hormone replacement therapy (HRT).

That combination of factors has seen a 3.5% increase in hospital visits between 2013 and 2018, with 49.1 million patients visiting Emirati hospitals last year. Over three-quarters of a million (789,198) public inpatient admissions were recorded in 2018, while 119,897 surgical procedures were undertaken by Emirati doctors last year as well.



The runaway success of the UAE medical tourism sector is only project to continue in the coming years. Following on from the record sales of Dh12.1 billion in 2018, experts expect that trend to carry on and reach a high of Dh19.5 billion by 2023, while the Dubai government have targeted a goal of attracting over half a million medical tourists annually by 2020.