

## How Is the UAE Improving Healthcare With IT?

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Ever at the forefront of medical technology, the UAE is looking to enhance its healthcare system even further through the use of IT in 2023. In February, the country's Emirate Health Services (EHS) launched its innovation strategy which covers the period from now until 2026, encompassing topics such as big data, telemedicine and mobile apps, among others.

The UAE has long been seen as an ideal destination for medical tourism. The Emirati government is not willing to rest on its laurels, however, and has been funding technological advancements in its healthcare service for several years now. The pandemic only served to accelerate that process and as the country adjusts to the "new normal" of a post-Covid world, IT will be more important than ever in the healthcare sector.

### Covid as catalyst

Although the UAE had already been dabbling in the role of IT in medicine for several years prior to the outbreak of the coronavirus, the pandemic certainly served as a catalyst in its integration. As the virus took hold, EHS developed an app to spread awareness, facilitate appointments and log vaccinations. At its height in June 2022, the app had been downloaded over 1.7 million times.

One of the app's secondary functions was the ability to dispense telemedicine, whereby patients could conduct appointments with doctors remotely from their home. This feature has been continued in a post-Covid world, meaning people no longer have to travel to their local clinic to receive advice and diagnoses.

### First-of-their-kind projects

Already, 2023 has seen EHS launch two first-of-their-kind initiatives in the UAE. Care AI is a healthcare facility which relies upon smart capabilities to collect data, analyse patient patterns and provide more targeted care. By continually assimilating and assessment information about a patient's evolving condition, the system utilises big data to improve healthcare services.

Meanwhile, EHS has also teamed up with Microsoft and Schneider Electric to pioneer a Digital Twin project at the Al Qassimi Hospital in Sharjah. This sophisticated software maps the actual environmental performance of the site with its projected optimum, allowing for adjustments and tweaks to be made. The ultimate goal is to reduce energy consumption by 30% and curb the need for maintenance by 20%.

## Enlisting outside help

As with any initiative of this kind, it's important to ensure that all measures taken meet with international standards and best practices. For that reason, EHS hosted a number of panel discussions at the Arab Health exhibition at the Dubai World Trade Centre earlier this year. This event was a crucial step in bringing on board the world's best and brightest in the industry in order for local players to learn valuable lessons and gain expert insight.

As a result of the discussions, EHS was able to facilitate agreements between a number of Emirati companies and their international counterparts, ensuring that the former can benefit from the experience of the latter. It is this kind of collaboration, commitment and entrepreneurial spirit that will ensure the UAE remains at the forefront of healthcare technology for many years to come.