

ELECTIVE ESSAY

**OBJECTIVE 1: What is the most prevalent neurological condition in the UAE? And how do they differ from the UK?**

Generally speaking the most common neurological disorders are migraine, epilepsy, stroke, multiple sclerosis, sleep disorder and autism.

Migraine is the most common neurological condition in the developed world. It is more prevalent than diabetes, epilepsy and asthma combined – eight million people in the UK have migraine.<sup>1</sup> According to Dr Mughis Sheerani, consultant neurologist, in Dubai "headaches are the most common disorder that people experience and it is hard to imagine life without them."<sup>2</sup> This however is a benign condition the most common serious brain disorder worldwide is epilepsy with no age, racial, social class, national nor geographic boundaries. There are 40-50 million sufferers in the world today, 85% of whom live in developing countries.

There are two recent unpublished studies that show the prevalence of diabetes among citizens of the UAE as the second highest in the entire world. Although this is not a neurological condition per se it puts patients at risk of stroke. Smoking and obesity are other risk factors on the increase which add to the risk of stroke.<sup>3</sup>

Dr Jihad Inshasi and Mona Thakre carried out the first study addressing the prevalence of multiple sclerosis in the Dubai Native population and in the Immigrants in Dubai. They concluded that Dubai should be considered as one of the regions with medium to high risk for MS, with a prevalence rate higher than what has been previously believed. This was a surprising finding and may represent a true increase.<sup>4</sup> Having said this, the UK has a significantly higher rate than Dubai, with a rate of 144 per 100, 000, whereas the UAE has a rate of 20.01-60 per 100,000.

There are 10 million people in the UK living with a neurological condition which has a significant impact on their lives. These mostly include stroke, epilepsy, dementia, headache, and multiple sclerosis.

From my limited time in Dubai I noticed many more patients in the UAE had Potts disease of the spine, this was mainly in the South Eastern Asians who had tuberculosis. I also noticed a significant number of patients with transverse myelitis, which I have never seen before in

the UK. In the emergency department most patients were admitted with query status epilepticus. During ward rounds an interesting difference I noticed between the UAE and UK was the great number of patients with functional symptoms and conversion disorder being managed by the neurological team instead of the psychiatric team. Any psychiatric diagnosis is a diagnosis of exclusion so initial neurological investigations are necessary. However, even after a physical cause had been excluded patients were not seen by a psychiatrist. I am unsure if this is because the psychiatric team in the UAE only review acutely psychotic patients or it is because there are simply too many patients with functional symptoms.

**OBJECTIVE 2: How is the health care system organized in UAE? How does this differ from the UK?**

UAE health care system

The UAE health service is organized by the Department of Health and Medical services (DOHMS). This is further divided into:

- Dubai Health Authority (DHA): for public and private healthcare facilities in Dubai.
- Ministry of Health (MOH): for public and private healthcare facilities in the Emirates of Sharjah, Ajman and the rest of the north Emirates, also few public facilities in Dubai like Al Baraha Hospital and Al Amal Psychiatric Hospital.

The health care system is free to the local residents of the UAE. The health care doctors are a mixture of local doctors and foreign health professionals that trained in their home countries.

In 1970, there were only seven public hospitals in the UAE, whereas now there are over 40 hospitals, this is due to the multi-dollar investment by the government. The standard of care provided is deemed to be of very high quality. According to World Health Organisation (WHO) statistics, the UAE is ranked fourth in the world in terms of health care. The aims of the health services in UAE are to improve the well-being of the people and works very strategically to ensure patient centered care. Medical services include vaccinations, medical fitness examination and psychiatric treatment. A free GP service does exist to the locals however, it is formally known as a family doctor service.

Foreign nationals always receive free treatment in an emergency condition.



### UK health care system-NHS

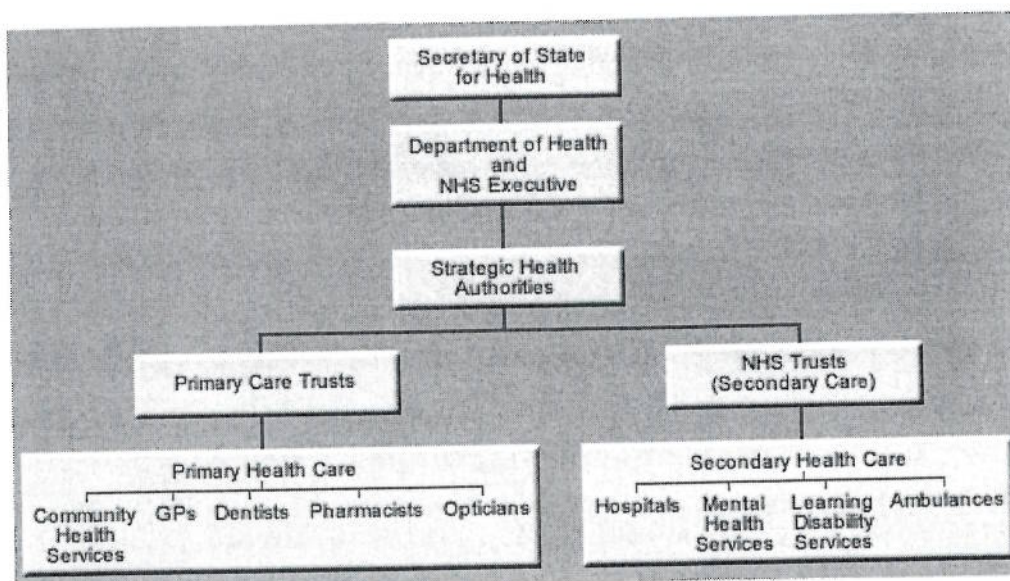
The National Health Service (NHS) is in charge of the healthcare in Britain. The department of health centrally monitors the NHS. At the top is the Secretary of State for Health, the government minister in charge of the Department of Health, responsible for the NHS in England and answerable to Parliament. The Department of Health and the NHS Executive are responsible for the strategic planning of the health service as a whole. Under the Department of Health are 28 Strategic Health Authorities, which plan health care for the population of the region they cover.

It consists of four independent organizations, one for each country, which makes up the UK. Each service is in charge of treating citizens of parts of the UK.

Healthcare in the UK is free to all citizens who are registered as long term residents in the UK. It is one of the very few countries which provide a free walk in system of health care with little supplementary charges.

The UK has a very strong private healthcare service, which is usually funded by private insurance contributors.

However, private health insurance is often used in addition to the NHS.



**OBJECTIVE 3: What steps have the government taken to improve the health care in UAE?**

Standards of healthcare are considered to be generally high in the United Arab Emirates, resulting from increased government spending during strong economic years. According to the UAE government, total expenditures on healthcare from 1996 to 2003 were US\$436 million. Currently there are 40 hospitals in the UAE whereas there were only seven in 1970.

The number of doctors per 100,000 (annual average, 1990–2005) was 17. The life expectancy at birth in the UAE is at 78.5 years.

Recently the country has been benefiting from medical tourists from all over the Gulf Cooperation Council (United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, Oman, Qatar and Kuwait). The UAE currently attracts medical tourists seeking plastic surgery and advanced procedures, cardiac and spinal surgery, and dental treatment, as health services have higher standards than other Persian Gulf countries.

The ministry of health promotes awareness with regular campaigns in order to educate people about living a healthy lifestyle. <sup>5</sup>

**Statistics- UAE**

<b>Total population</b>	<b>4,248,000</b>
<b>Gross national income per capita (PPP international \$)</b>	<b>31,190</b>
<b>Life expectancy at birth m/f (years)</b>	<b>77/80</b>
<b>Healthy life expectancy at birth m/f (years, 2003)</b>	<b>64/64</b>
<b>Probability of dying under five (per 1 000 live births)</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Probability of dying between 15 and 60 years m/f (per 1 000 population)</b>	<b>84/62</b>
<b>Total expenditure on health per capita (Intl \$, 2006)</b>	<b>673</b>
<b>Total expenditure on health as % of GDP (2006)</b>	<b>2.6</b>

(Taken from the WHO)

**OBJECTIVE 4: Continue to practice clinical skills with an evaluative aspect**

During my time in Dubai, I was attached to the neurology team at Rashid Hospital. I have learnt from many experienced doctors and nurses and the whole experience has been very informative and rewarding. All the doctors were extremely helpful, kind and willing to teach. Attending daily ward rounds and being exposed to new cases has increased my knowledge significantly especially as this hospital has the biggest neurology centre in the UAE. Using

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my language skills to converse in the language of the locals gave me a better understanding of the conditions prevalent in the hospital. Observing the team allowed me to draw comparisons to the UK broadening my mind to a different system. I obtained histories and thoroughly examined a variety of patients with neurological conditions. My aim is continue to examine patients and increase my knowledge by doing some further reading.

## **REFERENCES**

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<sup>1</sup>The Long-term (Neurological) Conditions National Service Framework, Department of Health, 2005). <http://www.migrainetrust.org/factsheet-facts-and-figures-about-migraine-10860>

<sup>2</sup> <http://gulfnews.com/news/gulf/uae/health/headaches-most-common-disorder-doctor-says-1.662051>

<sup>3</sup> "Diabetes in the United Arab Emirates and Other Arab Countries: Need for Epidemiological and Genetic Studies" *Genetic Disorders in the Arab World: United Arab Emirates*. <http://www.cags.org.ae/cbc07db.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> "Prevalence of Multiple Sclerosis in Dubai, United Arab Emirates" *International Journal of Neuroscience*, 1-6,2011

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.bhf.org.uk/heart-health/statistics.aspx>