

# Clinical Research in the United Arab Emirates



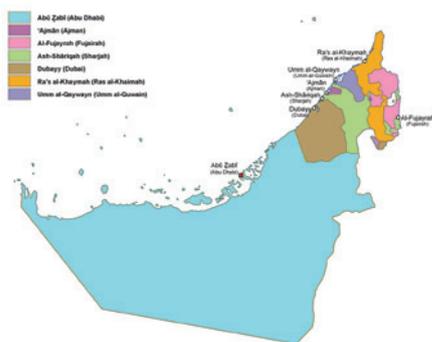
With a bustling population composed of a mixture of expats and locals, and the topic of clinical research not being so popular among the crowd, the phenomenon of clinical research has finally come into the picture in UAE. The clinical research sector in UAE is currently going well within the country, with many pharmaceutical companies investing in studies, with the patient pool consisting of the population in the Middle East.

operating procedures (SOPs)/guidelines in regard to conducting clinical trials, follows good clinical practice (GCP), conducts training, and maintains an ethics committee as per GCP standards.



## Geography of the United Arab Emirates

UAE is bordered by the Arab Gulf to the north, the Gulf of Oman and the Sultanate of Oman to the east, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the Sultanate of Oman to the south, and the State of Qatar and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to the west.



Population: 9.206 million<sup>1</sup>

## Introduction

With such a diverse population in the United Arab Emirates, and the diversity of languages as well, communication is not an issue among the people. In order to boost the healthcare system of UAE, more and more clinical trials will have to be put in place, maintained and managed. The studies most popular in UAE are Phase III and Phase IV, as well as - most definitely - observational studies. Although clinical research is not new in UAE, it is still a questionable topic for many people, and hence observational studies are considered less challenging to perform in this region. This makes observational trials – with their larger number of participants and community-based approach – more pragmatic in nature.

## Regulatory Framework and System

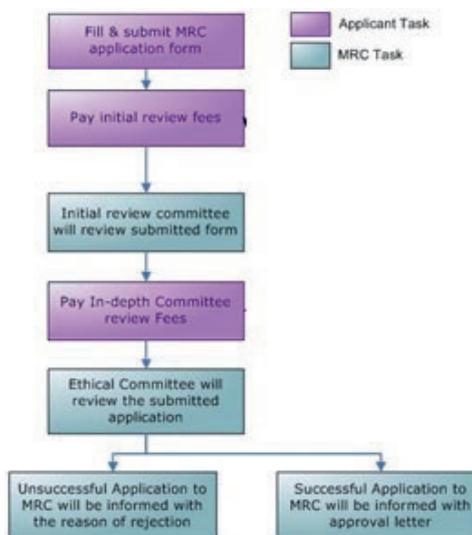
The regulatory bodies are the Ministry of Health, Dubai Health Authority and the Health Authority of Abu Dhabi, all of which are considered as important regulatory authorities in matters of approval for different centres where the study will be conducted and performed.

Each of these regulatory authorities follows standard

## Dubai Health Authority

Medical Research Committee (MRC) acts as an institutional review board at Dubai Health Authority.<sup>2</sup>

The primary objective of the MRC is to protect the mental and physical welfare, rights, dignity and safety of participants in research, to facilitate ethical research through efficient and effective review processes, to promote ethical standards of human research, and to review research in accordance with the DHA code of ethics and the ICHGCP guidelines, ensuring that all such investigations conform to ethical principles including those described in the Declaration of Helsinki.



## Health Authority Abu Dhabi<sup>3</sup>

The Mission of HAAD's Medical Research Section is to

promote world-class research that improves health and quality of life for all people in the Emirate of Abu Dhabi, while ensuring ethical research conduct and protection of human subjects.

### The Vision of HAAD's Medical Research Section is "Optimal Health through Research".

The Medical Research Section facilitates the work of the Abu Dhabi Health Research Council, the Abu Dhabi Research Ethics Committee (ADREC), and the Scientific Peer Review Committees (PRCs). The Medical Research Section helps to develop the Abu Dhabi Health Research Strategy, define research ethics policies and standards, create research funding / grant administration procedures, apply evaluation methods, and measure key performance indicators of Abu Dhabi's progress in health research.

The goals of medical research in Abu Dhabi are to:

1. Develop the best methods to improve public health by addressing priority disease conditions and monitoring progress towards achieving targets.
2. Create a world-class health research environment that protects human subjects, generates productive research, and fosters professional development of healthcare practitioners.
3. Support "The Abu Dhabi Economic Vision 2030" by contributing to our society's economic diversification into knowledge-based industries, including vibrant health research, biotechnology, and life sciences sectors.

### Medical Research Section Strategy

The strategy for building a world-class health research system in Abu Dhabi is to:

- Produce evidence for health policy decision-making
- Conduct research to address priority health needs
- Strengthen capacity with appropriate policies and standards
- Regulate research practices to ensure high ethical standards
- Translate health research into equitable health and economic development
- Monitor research progress and evaluate public health outcomes.
- To conduct clinical research, the facilities need to be licensed and authorised to conduct human subject research; only then can the study be conducted at site.

### Ministry of Health

The Ministry of Health covers certain hospitals, which include: Kuwaiti Hospital - Sharjah, Fujairah Hospital - Fujairah, RAK hospital - Ras Al Khaimah, Sheikh Khalifa Hospital - Ajman, Al Baraha Hospital - Dubai, and Al Amal Hospital - Dubai.



### Timelines

The timelines for approval by the ethics committee and regulatory authority range from 30 days – 90 days. During the summer period, which includes the Holy Festival of Ramadan, approvals take slightly longer than usual.

### Submission Timelines

The documents are usually submitted two weeks to one month before the meeting date of the ethics committee and the regulatory authority. Depending on the documents, if anything is needed, the relevant person is instructed to complete the package within the given timelines.

### Potential Sites in United Arab Emirates for Clinical Trials

- Dubai Health Authority: Rashid Hospital, Latifa Hospital, Hatta Hospital, Baraha Hospital
- Ministry of Health: As mentioned before
- Health Authority Abu Dhabi: The following hospitals are authorised to conduct human subjects research, Sheikh Khalifa Medical City, Corniche Hospital, Tawam Hospital, Al Ain Hospital, Madinat Zayed New Hospital (AGH), Sila Hospital, Al Dhafra Family Medicine Center, Liwa Hospital, Delma Hospital, Ghayathi Hospital, Marfa Hospital, Specialist Diabetes Treatment and Research Centre (Imperial College London Diabetes Centre), Mafraq Hospital, Oasis Hospital, National Rehabilitation Center, Al Rahba Hospital, SEHA Dialysis Services, Zayed Military Hospital, Ambulatory Healthcare Services, Gulf Diagnostic Center Hospital

### Conclusion

Clinical research will soon make its mark in the industry in this region, with many pharmaceutical companies, institutions and sponsors already looking at this region, as they are aware of the extensive patient pool and systematic regulatory submissions.

### References

1. World Bank
2. Dubai Health Authority
3. Health Authority of Abu Dhabi



**Adhiti Sharad Kumar** has been working for a clinical research organisation for the past four years, and has been involved in the quality management and regulatory functions. She is also the Coordinator for the Gulf Chapter of the Association of Clinical Research Professionals – ACRP. This group is focused on promoting clinical research around the Gulf, and is involved in training sessions, networking events, etc.  
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