The Weqaya Program for Cardiovascular Disease and Diabetes
High rates of cardio-metabolic disease were reported in the UAE by 2005 and the World Health Organization reported the UAE as having the 2nd highest rate of diabetes worldwide. In response, the Health Authority-Abu Dhabi established a comprehensive, population-level program to screen, diagnose, prevent and treat the risk factors for cardio-metabolic disease with the ambitious aim of reducing (predicted) cardiovascular burden by 75% by 2030.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES
(Also figures 1 and 2)
- Improve the health of the whole population

Improve the health of the whole population to prevent future development of cardiovascular disease.

- Individual health screening
Since launching in April 2008, approximately 94% of the population of Emirati Nationals have been successfully screened for cardiovascular risk.

- Evidence-based planning
Interventions are based upon International medical best-practice.

- Dynamic range of actions
A range of options were implemented to account for differing individual preferences for health interaction (e.g. Courier-delivered health reports, healthy living brochures, a Weqaya Hotline and web-based health management).

- “Impact Pyramid” of synergistic interventions at individual-, group- and population-levels
Simultaneously adopting a top-down societal approach to improve accessibility of healthier choices and a bottom-up approach to empower individuals and groups to make healthier choices.

The Weqaya program has tackled the most important public health issue of this decade by establishing a far-reaching program, bringing many specific benefits:
A website, dedicated call-centre and user-driven appointment booking system make Weqaya results and follow-up more accessible.

Population level data from Weqaya screening is actively used to establish effective healthcare system planning and programs.

Findings from the first 3 years of Weqaya have been used to iteratively refine the Weqaya screening program for its second phase commencing in October 2011.

A Weqaya Advisory Task Force was established to bring together global thought leaders with regional implementation teams to jointly develop local and global solutions for cardiovascular disease and diabetes.

A Weqaya Innovators’ Forum was established utilizing private-public partnership to deliver health including telecommunications, pharmaceutical and food and beverage industries.

The Weqaya program has gained International recognition for its vision and achievements including publications1, 2, presentations3-10 and local and International media coverage such as the BBC Middle-East Business Report11, The Economist12 and Middle-East Health Magazine.13

In summary, the major achievements to date for the Weqaya program include:

- Approximately 174,000 (~94% of the population) individuals were screened and provided access to their personal health results online, ~105,000 Weqaya health reports were home courier-delivered.
- Early diagnosis of risk factors in over one third of the population including diabetes, hypertension, dyslipidaemia and obesity.
- Approximately 4000 newly diagnosed diabetic patients were established in follow-up programs.

FUTURE
The Weqaya program has received International recognition for establishing a framework and vision for positive, sustainable change in healthcare delivery and community engagement with a shift from curative to preventive, physician-centered to patient-centered care, increased patient choice utilizing patient-controlled health records, increased engagement of health with academic and private sectors, and increased use of e-health and m-health strategies.

REFERENCES

   a. Available at: [http://www.worlddiabetescongress.org/pages/programme-glance](http://www.worlddiabetescongress.org/pages/programme-glance)


---

**THE WEQAYA TEAM**

Dr. Cother Hajat is the lead for Cardio-metabolic disease (including Weqaya), obesity and tobacco-control in Abu Dhabi. A UK-qualified physician with Membership of the Royal College of Physicians(UK) and a Public Health Physician with Membership of the Faculty of Public Health(UK). She holds a MPH (Distinction) and PhD in cardio-metabolic disease from King’s College, London. Since 2007 she has been recognised by Marquis-Who’s-Who Biography as one of “today’s leaders and achievers”.

Other team members in the Weqaya program:

1. Dr. Harrison, Director, Public Health and Policy
2. Dr. Karrar, Senior Officer
3. Dr. Shather, Officer
4. Dr AlAmeria, Senior Officer