

## 250 Healthcare Centres to Cater to 1.5m Residents

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DUBAI – The **Dubai Health Authority (DHA)** has compiled a provisional list of 250 Out-Patient Care Practice (OCP) centres where residents can register to access basic healthcare starting early next year.

Under the compulsory Health Funding System, at least 1.5 million Dubai residents, more than a million of whom are expats working in a wide range of jobs, will be required to register with the **DHA's** current provisional list of OCPs within a year, to receive basic health services.

According to a rough estimate, the number of clinics are expected to rise to anywhere between 300 to 500 by next year.

The roll-out process of the compulsory health system starts with residents being required to register with private or public clinics of their choice.

They will then be issued a health card which will give them access to essential healthcare within Dubai only.

However, the services within the new system cannot be accessed until an employer starts the corporate healthcare scheme at some point during 2009. A **DHA** spokesperson said the clinics are currently working with the Healthcare Management Companies to identify the patient-handling capacity and a price list.

Clinics will not be allowed to refuse treatment to a registered patient.

"Hospitals and clinics cannot register more than they may be able to handle and risk losing their licence," said a spokesperson. Since the announcement of the system earlier this year, all public and private hospitals have been required to register with the **DHA**- the regulatory body -- to be able to offer the essential services.

Employers or individuals will have to pay a sum of between Dh500-800 to the Health Benefits Contribution (HBC) pool while the patients will be required to pay Dh25 (figure expected to be revised) on each visit.

Licensed doctors allowed to work within an OCP include general practitioners, family medicine doctors, pediatricians and internal medicine doctors.

The entire registration process for Dubai has to be completed within a year. The current insurance schemes will continue until, as and when all Dubai employees/residents are registered.

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