

Communication Poses Major Healthcare Problem

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ABU DHABI — Communication is a major healthcare problem that creates many errors, according to a health specialist.

“The biggest safety issue, especially when you’re dealing with multi-cultural [health providers] coming from different background and having different languages is communication.

“It’s a tricky issue and the major problem in creating many errors,” said Mohan Chellapa, Head of Business Development at Johns Hopkins Medicine International, which manages the Tawam Hospital, Al Rahba Hospital and Corniche Hospital in Abu Dhabi.

He was giving a lecture during a masterclass at the first Abu Dhabi-GCC Health and Investment Forum in the UAE capital on Tuesday.

Chellapa noted that the ratio of healthcare professionals in the UAE is about 1.6 physicians per 1,000 population compared to the US which is 2.9 to 3 while the nurses are about 4 to 4.2 per 1,000 population compared to the US which is about 9 or 9.5.

“This gap is enormous because nearly 96 per cent of nurses who are working here are all from outside the country and about 70 per cent of the doctors are also again from outside,” he said.

“The solution is really to create the home-grown pool of doctors and physicians coming from here. For medical education, investments in terms of providing training for doctors are an immediate necessity here,” he added.

“The UAE nationals make up at least 17 per cent of the manpower within the hospitals. On a more senior level, like chief of department, it is much smaller with one UAE national out of 10 or even less. For senior positions in surgery, you’ll find that to be much worse,” Dr Abdul Karim Al Fahim, Consultant and Chief of General Surgery at the Mafraq Hospital in Abu Dhabi, told *Khaleej Times*.

At present, there is no provision for post-graduate degrees in medicine in the UAE, according to Al Fahim. Undergraduates have to go abroad for post-graduate and specialised courses. “This is what we’re advocating, but I don’t think there is any plan right now,” he said.

Al Fahim called on a provision in the current system to further train medical students in the country to provide them the additional opportunity of getting residency abroad.

“I think we have the facilities and the manpower (skills) of our doctors here to do that,” he said.

“We at Mafraq train on average around 50 undergraduate students per batch. They are mostly non-UAE nationals from Ajman Medical School or from regional countries. We also have one or two UAE nationals at a time,” said Al Fahim.

(Khaleej Times)