

New Federal Law on HIV/ Aids Patients Soon

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DUBAI - A new federal law on HIV/Aids patients is due to come into effect in the first quarter of this year, according to the Minister of Health. The law will outline the patients' rights.

The UAE Minister of Health Humaid Mohammed Obaid Al Qutami, in an interview to *Khaleej Times*, gave the details of the new law. He addressed issues including a staff shortage in the health sector and the control of drug prices.

There are 540 registered cases of Aids among UAE nationals in the country and the new law would define the patients' areas of work and education.

"The UAE is among the first countries in the GCC to take positive steps to contain the disease according to international standards."

Al Qutami acknowledged there was a staff shortage but said it was an issue worldwide. Top priority had been given to training the staff to solve the shortage. Al Qutami said the ministry had also taken steps to address concerns that UAE drug prices were higher than regional prices.

"We set up a new system for drug pricing in 2008 that works in conjunction with the international drug prices. For the past three years, we have not increased the prices of drugs, except marginally. We have also formed committees to fix prices and check price hikes. We will soon put in place a mechanism for pharmacies to see if they are complying with the prices fixed by the MoH." However, Al Qutami said the UAE had been dependant on imported drugs which impacted price.

"In fact, the MoH is encouraging the local manufacturing of essential and important medicines so as to balance the prices," he said.

{ Khaleej Times }