

Stress city

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Doctor warns frantic pace of Dubai life is making many residents sick

A top neurologist has warned that Dubai's hectic lifestyle is taking its toll on people's health.

Dr Muhammad Ismail, from the American Hospital in Dubai, moved to the UAE from Florida two years ago and says he has been shocked by the number of patients he sees suffering from migraines brought on by stress.

He said: "I thought there would be more lifestyle stress in the United States but I was surprised at what I found in Dubai. I see about 20 patients per day and about 50 per cent have migraines. "There are many triggers for migraines but stress is one of the key factors. It's the fast lifestyle, work pressures, family stress and balancing everything. "And there are more people with migraines since the economic crisis began. People are now worried about the job situation."

Carole Spiers, a stress management expert with companies across Dubai, said she has seen a marked rise in the number of people in Dubai suffering from stress over the past four years. She said: "People are going into panic mode in light of the recession but it's here and it's affecting the world and Dubai."

The UAE has signed up to the International Labour Organisation's convention on workers rights in a bid to protect people being forced to work in excess of 48 hours a week but there are claims the regulations are exploited by some firms. But the threat of redundancy is thought to be the biggest stress-causing factor in the current climate. The latest Ministry of Labour figures show 405,000 residency visas were cancelled between October 2008 and March.

Three in every four UAE-based professionals are worried about job security and 57 per cent of them said their company had cut jobs, a survey by Bayt.com and YouGov showed last month.

"There is a lack of security now, employees with short-term contracts are going to be concerned they are not going to last as long as they thought," Spiers said. Aside from the pressures of work, the party lifestyle in Dubai also plays a part in the high number of migraine sufferers.

"Migraines more commonly affect younger people and we have a young population here in Dubai," Spiers added.

(Zawya)