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## Human Capital: Driving UAE Healthcare Forward

*Source:*

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UAE Minister of Health, HE Dr Hanif Hassan Ali Al Qassim met with regional healthcare industry leaders recently to discuss international investment and the need to recruit and develop world-class talent in the country's burgeoning healthcare sector, at a special forum organised by UAE-based consultancy Vision Executive Search.

The inaugural UAE Healthcare Investment forum took place under the banner 'Human Capital and the Health Economy', and was facilitated by Dr Rubin Minhas, Clinical Director and Editor-in-Chief, British Medical Journal Evidence Centre.

Commenting on the motives behind this first-of-its-kind event, Nairouz Bader, organizer and CEO of Vision Executive Search, said: "The panel discussion has been designed to map out a comprehensive strategy and programme of initiatives to drive inward investment across all aspects of the country's medical system, with a focus on human capital and sustainable capacity building."

A panel of key industry leaders including Craig McLaren, Regional MD, Johnson & Johnson and Chairman of the Middle East Devices & Diagnostics Trade Association (MECOMED); Jan Felton, CEO, Modern Pharmaceutical Company; Dr. Walid Kattouha, Head of Middle East, Novartis; and Maurice Faber, VP Middle East, Siemens, were joined by over 50 senior industry, and local and international government representatives.

Opening the session, HE Dr Al Qassim cited the UAE's long history of commitment to the development of local talent as a key driver for economic prosperity. "Transferring knowledge has always one of our top national priorities. Everything is geared towards the importance and development of our human capital," he said.

Jan Felton, CEO, Modern Pharmaceutical Company echoed his sentiments, and said: "Human capital is key in defining anything to do with healthcare. An enormous amount has already been done here and we have created an environment where human capital is beginning to stick. People are not here for just three years before moving on, and this gives us a great opportunity to develop that human capital for the benefit of the economy."

Regional standards in healthcare provision also came under the spotlight. "We have always had a shared objective in improving standards of quality in the region. There's been a quantum leap forward in the last decade, particularly on the front of partnership. As an industry we have invested and continue to invest significantly in the professional education of healthcare professionals. Companies now are trying to train people here, in the region, to make it more sustainable for advancement in terms of technology and understanding," remarked Craig McLaren, Regional MD, Johnson & Johnson.

Johnson, who is also Chairman of the Middle East Devices & Diagnostics Trade Association (MECOMED), highlighted the opportunities for further collaboration. "Through MECOMED we talk to authorities around the region on where are the touch points where we can help as an association, and as an industry, and have a common objective to help the authorities in balancing the quality of healthcare in the region, as well as the competence, skills and standards of the people who work in the industry," he said.

Current healthcare sector operational issues were flagged by Siemens VP Middle East, Maurice Faber. "It's already a challenge to keep our healthcare colleagues up-to-date with technology, which is advancing rapidly. And equipment needs the right 'driver'. We would like to partner with the Ministry of Health in finding ways to secure the operators and we are a very willing partner in this. There is great knowledge within the country, but we need to find a way to share it," he said.

The importance of investing in research was also a hot topic. "Our industry is all about innovation and skills. We are doing a lot of work with healthcare professionals in developing capabilities and using our expertise to develop research capabilities," commented Walid Kattouha, Head of Middle East for Novartis.

Johnson & Johnson's McLaren related this directly back to knowledge capital. "Our value as an industry is not necessarily financial, it's based around knowledge and what we can offer, and that's where the most value can be given," he remarked.

Commenting on the importance of the event to the healthcare recruitment industry, Peter Felix, US-based President of the Association of Executive Search Consultants (AESC), said: "I congratulate Nairouz Bader and Vision Executive Search, members of the worldwide Association of Executive Search Consultants, on hosting and organising this valuable seminar.

"Healthcare is a critically important issue for the UAE as it seeks to compete in the global market in terms of its environment and standard of living, and its bid to attract leading executive talent to live in the Emirates. Healthcare is a lightning rod for senior executives concerns about international locations, and therefore has a direct bearing on the war for talent that is now raging in both the developed and emerging markets. I am sure that constructive policies will be developed from this seminar – and future events - that position the UAE as leaders in this arena."

A second, larger forum is tentatively scheduled for Spring 2011.

### **About Vision Executive Search (VES)**

VES is a leading UAE-based executive search firm with international experience covering talent requirements across the Middle East and select global destinations. VES specialises in senior executive level recruitment in Life Sciences and other specialist industry sectors. Nairouz Bader, CEO, hails from a pharmaceutical and life science industry background, with previous management roles at Hoffman La Roche and Glaxo Wellcome. She is a board member and Middle East representative of the Association of Executive Search Consultants, and an official expert in human resources and talent for the OSEC – Business Network Switzerland.

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