

MENTAL HEALTH

The business case for facilities
in the Middle East





FOREWORD

The pandemic has had far reaching consequences that have impacted all aspects of life and has challenged Rapid adoption of virtual technologies during the pandemic such as online shopping and work-from-home has altered the social norms.

A less visible, but perhaps more significant impact has been on the human psyche: our mental health. The pandemic upended our well entrenched way of life and for many, a bigger challenge has been recognising the symptoms of poor mental health.

Extended periods of isolation, or self isolation stemming from repeated lockdowns, combined with the closure of travel routes has had a significant impact on society. While life slowly begins to normalise and the world moves to “live with Covid”, many in society continue to be scarred by events experienced during the initial period of the pandemic.

In many ways, COVID-19 has helped to shine a light on an often taboo area of healthcare, but as life normalises, the world is finding itself inadequately prepared to cater to the needs of those impacted mentally by the pandemic.

Knight Frank’s global healthcare teams have collaborated to explore this inadequacy, specifically looking at the case for delivering more mental health facilities across the UAE and Saudi Arabia.

Our whitepaper explores the history of mental health, steps taken by regional governments to address mental health issues, with a specific comparison between the Middle East and the UK and rationalises the need for investment in supporting medical facilities.

I invite you to unpick our findings and would welcome the opportunity to discuss the report in more detail with you.

Shehzad Jamal
Partner - Healthcare and Education

THE BUSINESS CASE FOR MENTAL HEALTHCARE FACILITIES IN THE UAE AND SAUDI ARABIA



Population growth & demographic shifts

The UAE's population is expected to grow at a CAGR of 1.6% between now and 2030, closing in on 11 million people by 2030. Meanwhile in Saudi Arabia, the population is expected to grow at a CAGR of 2% and is projected to reach 43 million by 2030. Both countries have a young demographic profile, many of whom are being exposed to tremendous societal change and advancement, hence there is a higher risk of developing mental health conditions, particularly in the 20-39 age bracket. By 2030, the region is also expected to have a higher growth rate (up to 3X) of people aged over 60, who have a higher requirement for mental health related care.

Increasing incidence of non-communicable diseases (NCDs) and mental health disorders (MHDs)

There is a link between risk factors causing NCDs and MHDs. According to the WHO, patients suffering from diabetes are 2X-3X more likely to be diagnosed with depression. According to the NHS, 1 in 11 adults around the world have been diagnosed with diabetes hinting strongly at the likelihood of high levels of depression amongst the worlds' adult population. Similarly, conditions such as cancer can drive depression, anxiety and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Health regulators and institutions must focus on mental health as closely as NCDs to be able to provide continuous care.

Lack of inpatient facilities to service demand arising from outpatient facilities

There are approximately 72 private outpatient clinics within the UAE, but only a single Mental Health Facility dedicated to the entire population. In Saudi Arabia, there are approximately 99 psychiatric clinics with 21 inpatient facilities in the public sector, primarily catering to Saudi nationals. Our analysis shows that the ratio of outpatient to inpatient facilities is insufficient to manage the demand created by patients requiring care on an admission basis.

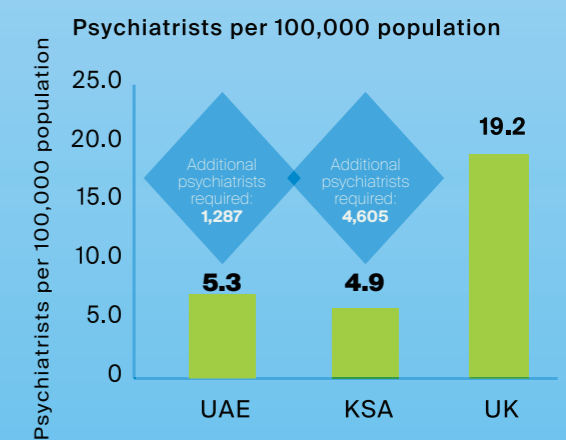
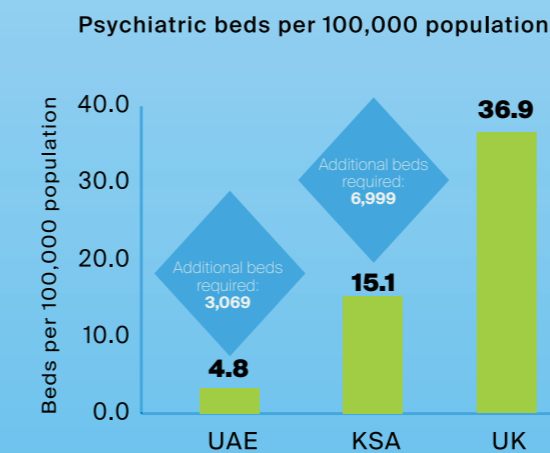
Increasing awareness and reinforcement through Government initiatives and strategies

The UAE's 2030 Government Health Strategy identifies mental health care as less developed in comparison to other health areas. The Dubai Health Authority (DHA) and Department of Health, Abu Dhabi (DOH) (estimate a national shortfall of 177 acute inpatient beds and 639 acute overnight beds for mental health services).

Based on the population growth anticipated in Saudi Arabia through 2030, an additional supply of 915 psychiatric beds will be required. This suggests an immediate requirement for investment in the sector to reduce the mortality and morbidity associated with MHDs.

Inadequate healthcare infrastructure and manpower

The region has a much lower bed density for mental health and psychiatrists per 100,000 population compared to developed countries. Therefore, a significant investment is required to meet growing demand and to be on par with international benchmarks. Moreover, lack of adequate mental health provisions has led to a rise in outbound medical value travel to countries such as Thailand, Switzerland and the USA, all of which rationalize the establishment of dedicated Mental Health facilities and investment in skilled psychiatrists and psychologists.

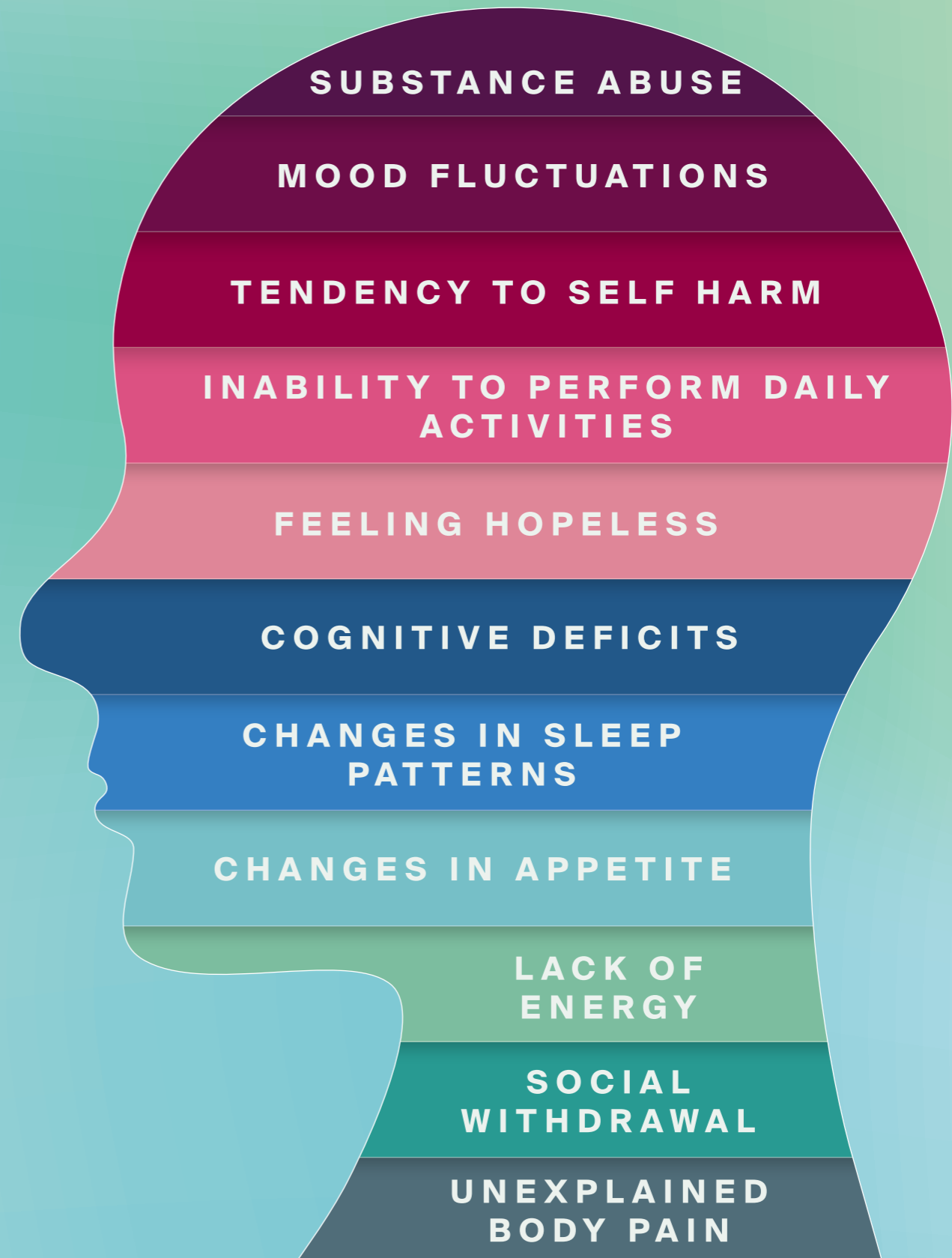


MENTAL HEALTH - A BASIC HUMAN RIGHT!

The World Health Organisation defines the concept of mental health as a state of well-being that enables people to cope with the stressors of life, realise their ambitions, learn well, work efficiently, and actively contribute to society. It is an integral component of health and wellbeing that underpins our individual and collective abilities to make decisions, build relationships and shape the world we live in.

Good mental health is more than the absence of mental disorders. It exists on a complex continuum, which differs from one person to the next, with varying degrees of difficulty and distress and potentially very different social and clinical outcomes. It focuses on our emotional, psychological, and social wellbeing and is equally important at every stage of a person's development, from early childhood to old age.

The most common signs and symptoms of poor mental health conditions are depicted in the adjacent exhibit:



A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE FROM THE MIDDLE EAST

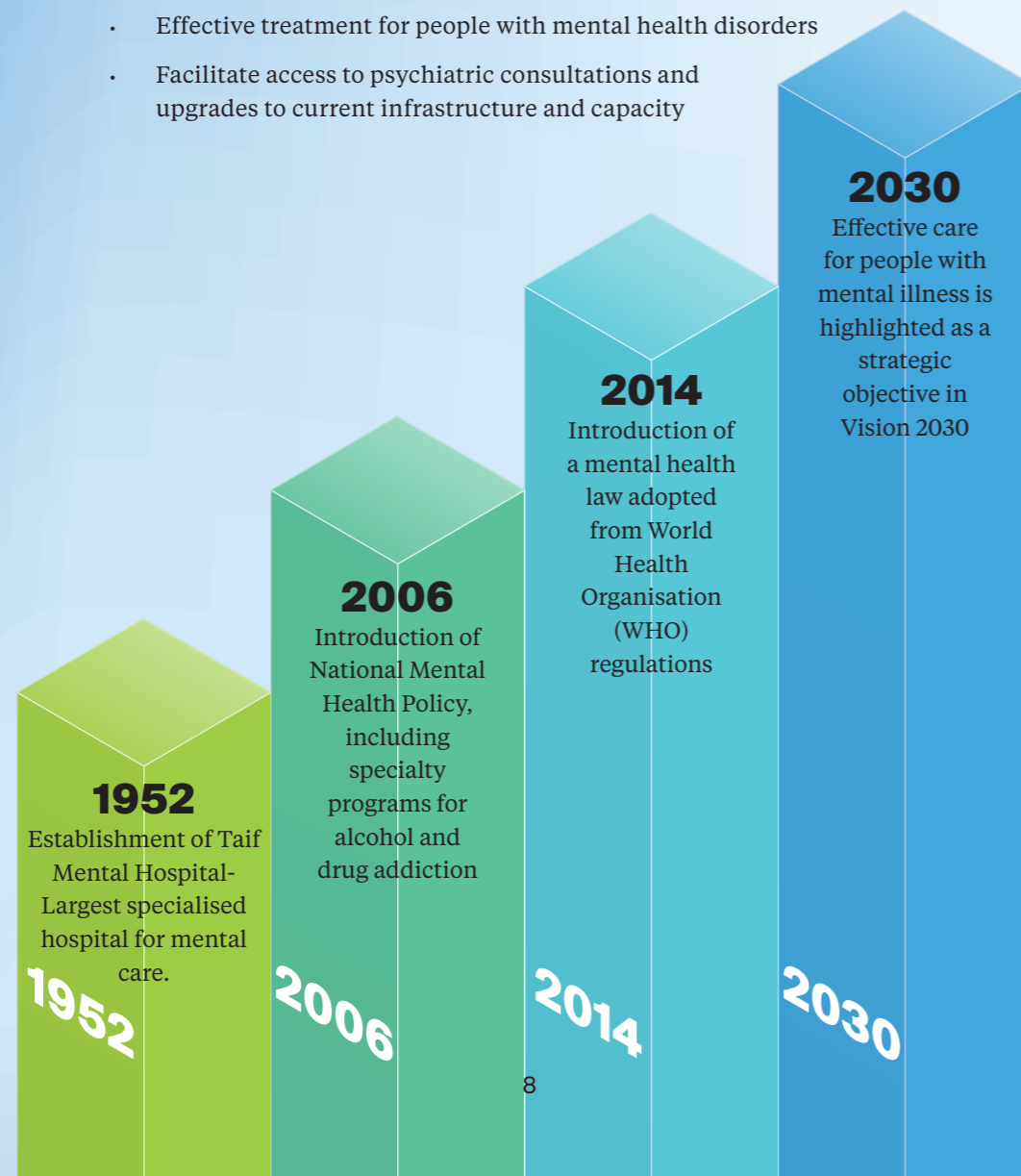
In the Middle East, Saudi Arabia established The Taif Mental Hospital, the largest specialised hospital for mental care in Taif in 1952. The UAE introduced mental health services in 1980, and fast forward to today, mental health is a key performance indicator in the UAE National Agenda. In Saudi Arabia, the National Mental Health Policy was introduced in 2006 and the provision of effective care for people with mental health illnesses is a stated strategic objective of Vision 2030.



KSA

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

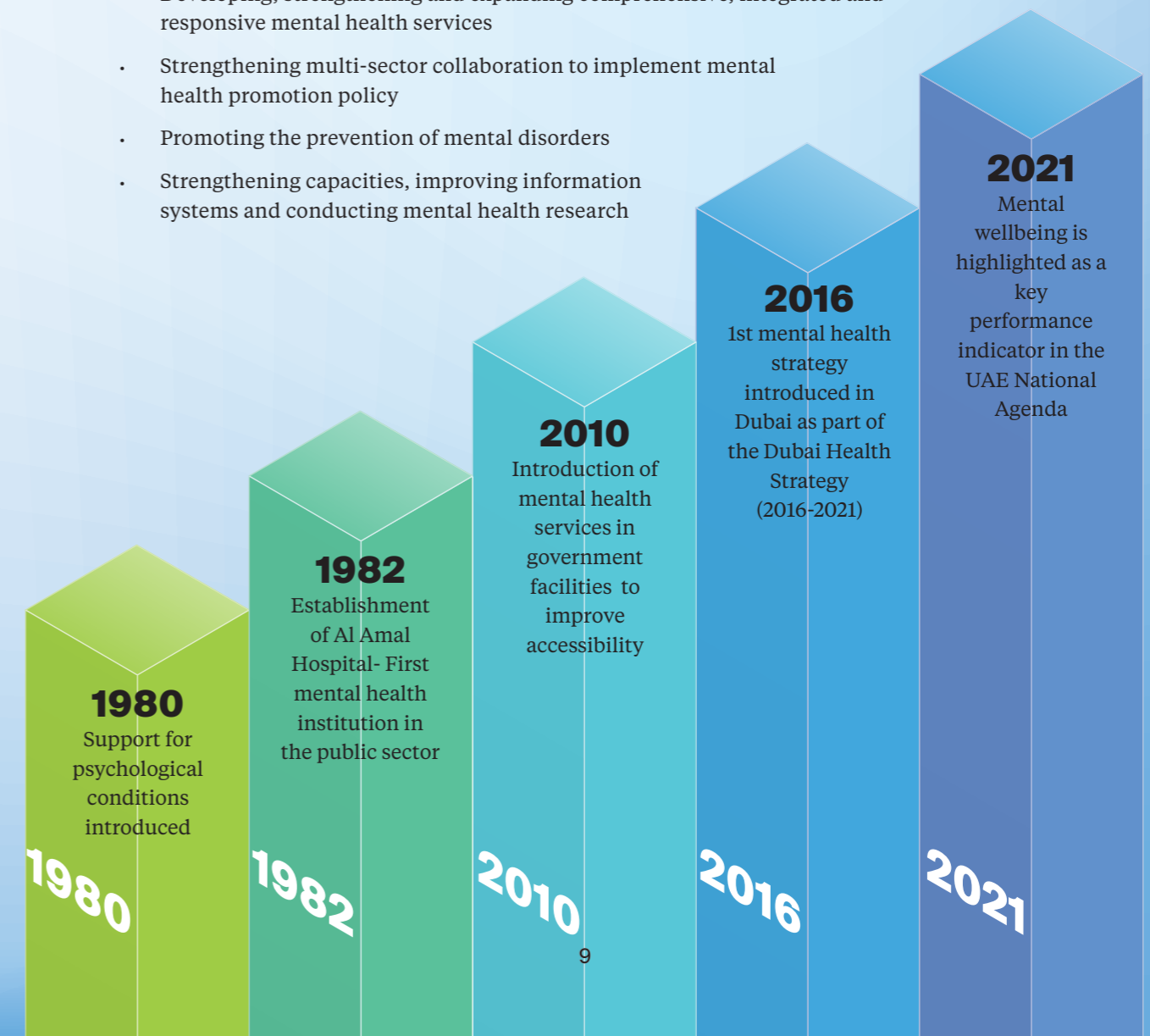
- Focus on preventive health to reduce burden of NCD's, as well as mental health illnesses
- Effective treatment for people with mental health disorders
- Facilitate access to psychiatric consultations and upgrades to current infrastructure and capacity



UAE

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

- Enhancing the promotion and improving awareness of mental health
- Developing, strengthening and expanding comprehensive, integrated and responsive mental health services
- Strengthening multi-sector collaboration to implement mental health promotion policy
- Promoting the prevention of mental disorders
- Strengthening capacities, improving information systems and conducting mental health research

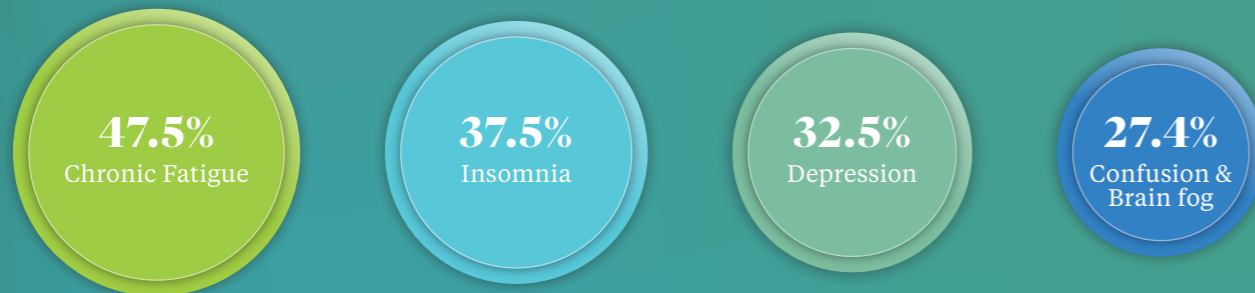


WHAT COVID-19 DID FOR MENTAL HEALTH

The long fingers of the pandemic reached into all of our lives, be it through bereavement, job insecurity, or social isolation – all of which have had a profound impact on our collective mental wellbeing.

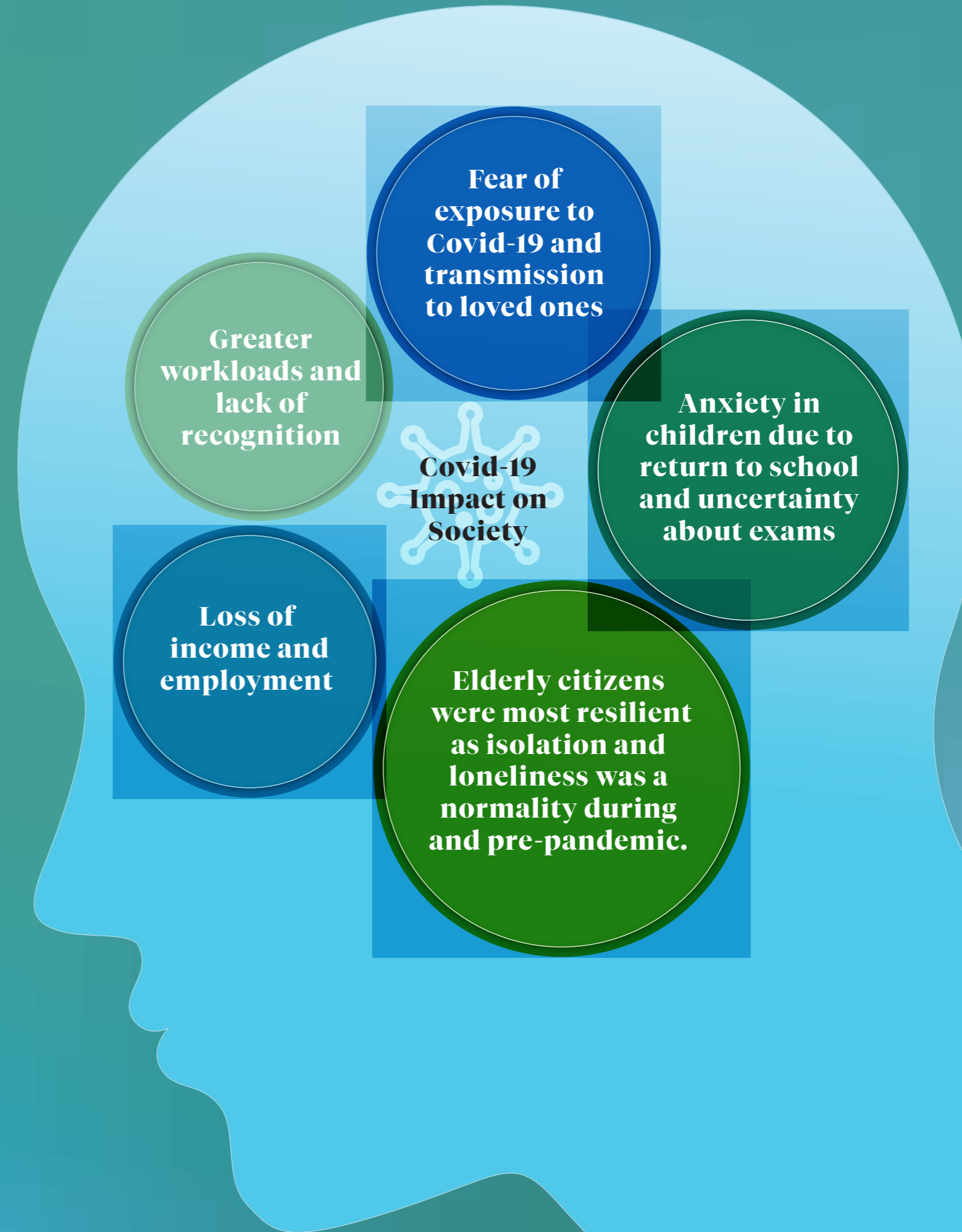
In the Middle East, the expatriate community faced heightened levels of stress not just as a result of COVID-19, but fear of job losses only exacerbated matters, given the direct link between residency and employment across the region. The loss of employment could not only disrupt remittances, but could (and did for many) result in having to relocate altogether. Indeed, cities like Dubai and Abu Dhabi shed up to 10% and 7% of their workforces, respectively.

ARISE UAE, an initiative of the UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction, in association with RAK hospital indicated that residents suffering from long haul COVID-19 conditions were showing signs of mental health symptoms throughout the pandemic:



Even in the UK which has a robust social care system, 69% of adults had some form of feeling or concern about the effect of COVID-19 on their lives, according to The Royal College of Psychiatrists, which also believes that England is in the middle of a mental health crisis.

Separately, Mind's (a UK charity) has published research to show that those who were struggling with mental health issues prior to the pandemic had been most impacted.



COVID - 19 MENTAL HEALTH - INITIATIVES AND ACCESSIBILITY IN THE MIDDLE EAST

The approach of UAE and Saudi governments' to address and provide support to those with mental health conditions as a result of the pandemic has been similar:



UAE



KSA



Vaccination:

- The UAE rolled out its vaccination program before the end of 2020, with vaccines freely available to all residents. Currently 99% of the population is fully vaccinated – the highest level in the world.



Telehealth:

- Inclusion of teleconsultation services within all insurance covers, including basic packages, led to increased virtual consultations services, including addressing mental health challenges.



Awareness Campaign:

- The National Programme for Happiness and Wellbeing launched a national campaign for mental health support to help residents overcome psychological impacts resulting from COVID 19 which included virtual sessions and hotline numbers.



Payment mechanism for mental health facilities

- Outpatient facility – There are few outpatient clinics that accept insurance, while most operate on a cash-only basis.
- Inpatient facility- There is only one dedicated public inpatient facility which provides free access to nationals. Expatriates can utilise insurance coverage, if they have psychiatry benefits or may opt to pay in cash.



Vaccination:

- Similar to the UAE, Saudi Arabia also rolled out its vaccination program before the end of 2020, which was freely available to all residents. 97.3% of the population is fully vaccinated at present.



Telehealth:

- Four psychosocial support platforms were established to provide free mental health virtual consultations.



Awareness Campaign

- Awareness campaigns were launched through live radio broadcasts, press releases and videos to address the mental health and wellbeing of people across the Kingdom.



Payment mechanism for mental health facilities

- Outpatient facility and inpatient facility: Public facilities are only accessible to Saudi nationals and is free of charge. Expats have limited access, i.e., only in an emergency.
- There are limited beds for psychiatry in the private sector – certainly not enough to cover the current expat population.
- Some insurance companies provide coverage of up to SAR 15,000 for psychiatry even in the most basic packages.

MENTAL HEALTH IN THE UK

In the UK, the subject of mental health has been studied by physicians since the Middle Ages. The establishment of The Bethlem Royal Hospital in southeast London in 1247, the oldest psychiatric hospital in the world, is a testament to the journey taken by the UK to position itself as a pioneer in addressing mental health issues. The Hospital was initially founded as an Asylum in Bishopsgate, and was first known as the Priory of St. Mary of Bethlehem becoming a hospital in 1329, The hospital was moved to Moorfields in Moorgate in 1675, then in 1815 to St. George's Fields and in 1930 to Monks Orchard. The hospital initially opened as a private facility and is currently part of the NHS Maudsley Foundation.

Mental Health Acceptance in the UK

- Over a third of the British public believe that people suffering from mental health conditions are likely to be violent. However, data shows that those suffering from poor mental health are in fact more likely to be the victims, rather than the perpetrators of violent crime. Separately, 80-90% of suicides in the UK are linked to mental distress (Mental Health First Aid England).
- The 2015 British Social Attitudes survey has found growing awareness amongst the public of mental health issues, however only 36% of respondents said they would be willing for someone showing symptoms of depression to marry into their family, a figure which drops to only 27% for someone experiencing symptoms of schizophrenia.
- Despite this, the general attitude towards mental health in the UK is moving towards one of acceptance, with increased awareness that mental health conditions encompass far more than just depression and anxiety, two of the most well-known challenges.



Covid -19 Mental Health – Initiatives and Accessibility in the UK

The approach of UAE and Saudi government to address and support the population with the rising levels of mental health conditions and cope with the pandemic was similar, in terms of how it was delivered:



Vaccination:

- The vaccination program was rolled out before the end of 2020, but in a phased manner and by appointments based on age and risk factors. Currently, nearly 88.2% of the population are fully vaccinated.



Telehealth:

- The delivery of telehealth via telephone and online video conferencing has significantly increased since the pandemic - 52.7 million telehealth visits (2020) vs 840,000 (2019). 86% of the therapists preferred to deliver psychological therapies via telehealth and there was a significant improvement in patients attendance rate (68%) when compared to conventional face-to-face offerings.



Awareness Campaign:

- Public Health England launched a nationwide 'Better Health - Every Mind Matters' campaign which encouraged people to get a free NHS approved Mind Plan from their official portal by responding to a set of five questions.
- 'Are You Ok?' Pledge – Aims to raise awareness of potential long-term impact of working through the Covid-19 crisis on nurses' mental health and wellbeing and to ensure access to sources of both formal and informal support.
























Payment mechanism for mental health facilities:

- Outpatient facility and inpatient facility: Patients due to receive compulsory psychiatric treatment or treatment imposed by court order are eligible for free treatment, regardless of their legal status. For all other non emergency mental health services, the NHS provides free treatment for UK nationals.
- Independent mental health providers receive US\$ 2.3 bn a year for the treatment of NHS patients. Overall, the four biggest operators Cygnet, Priory, Elysium and St Andrew's Healthcare, who together control 182 hospitals, or 6,700 mental health beds, of the independent sector's total of 10,123 beds, receive US\$ 1.6 bn of this figure.
- Insurance is accepted in outpatient settings. Although the NHS covers these services, self-pay or insurance shortens the waiting time for services. It is worth noting that whilst insurance does cover mental health services, there can be difficulties in obtaining the relevant cover, especially if the mental health issue is pre-existing. Sometimes, it is also more expensive due to the higher risk profile associated with pre-existing conditions, however there are specialist insurers who will consider such cases.

HEALTH PROFILE.

MENTAL HEALTH IN NUMBERS: HOW THE MIDDLE EAST STACKS UP AGAINST THE UK

	 UAE	 KSA	 UK
 DEPRESSION 3.4%	 SEPARATION ANXIETY 11.9%	 DEPRESSION 5.0%	
 ANXIETY 1.9%	 ATTENTION DEFICIT 8.0%	 ANXIETY 4.9%	
 SCHIZOPHRENIA 1.9%	 DEPRESSION 6.0%	 BIPOLAR 1.3%	
 BIPOLAR 1.9%	 SOCIAL PHOBIA 5.6%	 ATTENTION DEFICIT 0.9%	
 EATING DISORDER 1.9%	 OBSESSIVE COMPULSIVE DISORDER 4.1%	 SCHIZOPHRENIA 0.3%	

	 UAE	 KSA	 UK
Psychiatrists per 100,000 population	5.3	4.9	19.2
Psychiatric bed density per 100,000 population	4.8	15.1	36.9
Inpatient Facilities	1 (semi private)	21 public sector facilities (limited beds available in private sector)	201 independent facilities 387 NHS facilities.
Expenditure Health and Mental Health (USD)	Health Budget: USD 0.3 bn Mental Health: not available <small>Source: IHME,2019</small>	Health Budget: USD 9.8 bn Mental Health: USD 0.4 bn <small>Source: Saudi Mental Health Survey,2017</small>	Health Budget: USD 352.3 bn Mental Health: USD 38.7 bn <small>Source: IHME,2019</small>



Age

- Globally and in the Middle East, **10-20%** of children experience mental health issues in some form and **5-10%** from these half experience poor mental health by the age of 14.
- The segment below the age of 19 years which is approximately **31%** of Saudi nationals and **17%** of Emiratis would require dedicated facilities and specialists to cater to the rising burden of paediatric and adolescent mental ailments. People aged 20-39 have the highest prevalence of mental health conditions (Global Media Insight). Interestingly, this segment is also the audience with highest share of dedicated social media advertising in the UAE & Saudi Arabia. Advertising is known to exacerbate depression, insomnia and also create body image concerns
- The volume of the ageing population is higher in the UK in comparison to the UAE or Saudi Arabia. Age is a risk factor for Alzheimer's although not the only factor (National Institute of Ageing). Stressors such as the loss of the ability to carry out routine activities and a decline in functional ability which is also a common symptom increases the risk of developing such psychological distress through the onset of Alzheimer's. In the UAE and Saudi Arabia, the segment of the population aged 60 or more is forecast to grow 3X by 2030.



Gender

- In Saudi Arabia and the UK, more women than men suffer from a mental health condition. However, in the UAE, men are more likely to suffer from such conditions. This is not necessarily surprising given that men outnumber women in the UAE by a ratio of 2:1.



Eating disorder

- Eating disorders begin by the age of 10 and approximately **85%** of people suffer from it by the age of 39. In the UK, approximately 50% of patients with eating disorder such as anorexia, fully recover. 30% show an improvement, while 20% remain chronically ill.



Suicide

- As per NHS, **80-90%** of people who attempt, or die by suicide have a mental health condition, but not all are diagnosed. The rate of suicide in UAE stands at 6.2 persons per 100,000 population and is predominantly comprised of expats with a history of psychological illness such as depression and trauma such as recent unemployment.



PTSD

- There is no statistical data for PTSD however, our analysis has shown the condition to have become particularly prevalent during the pandemic, especially in healthcare workers, frontline staff and individuals inflicted by COVID-19. In the Middle East, our analysis shows that there is a higher proportion of the population suffering from PTSD due to political unrest in various parts of the region.

THE FUTURE OF MENTAL HEALTH IN THE UAE & SAUDI ARABIA



Affordability:

Although mental health is gradually becoming accessible within the UAE and Saudi Arabia, comprehensive insurance to cover treatments is only available to a premium paying segment of the population. The inpatient facilities provides free access only for nationals. Expats can utilise insurance coverage, only if they have psychiatry benefits included. Some outpatient facilities are unable to empanel themselves with insurance due to the high recruitment and operating costs. As a result, many are unable to match the pricing set by the insurance regulators which ultimately pushes the cost burden on to patients.



Stringent regulations

Regulations surrounding the licensing of Psychiatrists and psychologists is challenging, resulting in facilities unable to hire adequate talent, which results in long waiting lists. Unsurprisingly, this is leading to a high burnout rate in existing psychiatrists. In addition, due to the decentralised nature of the regulatory authorities and regular updates of mental health laws and regulations, particularly in the UAE, often there is ambiguity around the attitude, need and desire to establish additional mental health facilities.



Inadequate infrastructure

Traditionally, the facilities in the region are predominantly operated by the public sector. Primary research undertaken by Knight Frank indicates that these facilities have a shortage of beds due to the high patient numbers. Furthermore, poor medical infrastructure in these facilities deters cash patients.



Stigma associated with the illness:

60% of patients in the UAE and 80% of patients in Saudi Arabia suffering from poor mental health do not seek assistance or treatment due to historic and long-standing taboos around the subject.



STAKEHOLDER'S OPINION

Dubai Health Authority continuously strives towards providing quality healthcare services to patients and an environment that fosters the overall wellbeing of an individual. This has been made possible with the guidance of our leadership and strong emphasis that the healthcare infrastructure of the Emirate is equipped with the latest and most advanced technology and manned by highly qualified and experienced medical professionals.

Within the DHA, there is a strong realization that Mental health should not be viewed differently from any other health condition and treatment for mental health needs to be more mainstream. At present, mental health conditions are predominantly being catered for at public health facilities whilst private sector participation has been fairly limited.

Improving access for treatment of mental health is a priority and can be expedited by way of introducing it at the primary health level and supported by a strong referral system. In the lines below I have shared the most significant aspects of our plan to achieve our goals of making mental health more accessible:

- Qualify and train family physicians to diagnose, care and refer patients up the healthcare chain as required.
- Introduction of rehabilitation and social reintegration program for all ages suffering from such conditions
- Private sector participation: facilitate private sector participation (foreign or local) for the provision of quality mental health care in the country.

Over the years, Dubai has become a medical tourism destination and is attracting patients from Middle East, Asia and Africa. From a private sector perspective, this presents a strong business case as their target market is beyond the population of Dubai and mental health related services are fairly limited in these regions.



Dr Marwan Al Mulla

CEO, Health Regulation Sector, Dubai Health Authority

The number of people struggling with mental health conditions in the region has increased exponentially in the last decade, with the rates of mental illness and disorders similar to those found in other parts of the world. However, there are some specific challenges related to mental health in the region, such as a lack of awareness and understanding of mental health issues, as well as cultural and social stigmas that can make it difficult for people to seek treatment. Additionally, access to mental health services is extremely limited due to a shortage of mental health professionals and resources resulting in patients having to wait months before they are able to receive treatment, while many others are not able to afford the care due to its high cost. Despite these challenges, I feel hopeful because of the increased efforts in the recent years to improve mental health services and awareness in the region.



Dr. Saliha Afridi

Managing Director & Clinical Psychologist
The Lighthouse Arabia Center for Wellbeing

The pandemic has accelerated the need for better mental health and specialist sector services. Services can capture an array of different types of registration for either government or privately funded markets. It is often a hybrid of social care and educational expertise that is required to operate very complex businesses. Medical tourism and international operators, that have the expertise and bandwidth, are increasingly looking to enter new markets and jurisdictions. Healthcare and educational services are often in short supply, in many countries, and are attracting significant investor appetite from a broad church of different capital.



Julian Evans FRICS

Partner, Head of Healthcare

Mental Health has been identified as one of the key specialties of focus in Dubai, due to the increasing demand on mental health services. Generally speaking, there has been an increase in incidence of mental health conditions due to the constantly changing work pressures and social isolation resulting from Covid-19. However, at present there is limited availability for both inpatient and outpatient healthcare facilities catering to this demand, which essentially creates an opportunity for additional healthcare facilities in UAE and specifically in Dubai. The Dubai Healthcare Authority has also highlighted this in the recently published Dubai Investment guide 2021 and are keen to support private healthcare providers who are interested in servicing this gap. In addition, mental health institutions in Dubai would also service the demand arising from the neighbouring GCC countries owing to the attractiveness of the city as medical tourism destination for the region.



Mrs Linda Abdullah

Co-founder & CEO, Oryx Healthcare Consultancy

CO – AUTHORS

Shehzad Jamal

Partner,
Partner StratCon (Real Estate | Healthcare | Education)
+971 50 3832 491
Shehzad.Jamal@me.knightfrank.com

Dr. Gireesh Kumar

Associate Partner - Healthcare Advisory Services
+971 56 4845 490
Gireesh.Kumar@me.knightfrank.com

Dr. Saliha Afridi

Managing Director & Clinical Psychologist
The Lighthouse Arabia Center for Wellbeing
+971 (0)4 380 9289
drsafri@lighthousearabia.com

Mandip Bhogal

Partner Healthcare
+44 203 869 4702
Mandip.Bhogal@knightfrank.com

CONTACTS

Faisal Durrani

Partner
Head of Middle East Research
+971 4 4267 698
Faisal.Durrani@me.knightfrank.com

Julian Evans

FRICS Partner - Head of Healthcare
+44 20 7861 1147
Julian.Evans@knightfrank.com

Talha Jawid

Senior Manager (Healthcare & Education
Advisory)
Tel. #: +971 4 4267 649
Mob.#: +971 56 481 90 77
Falha.Jawaid@me.knightfrank.com

Shubhra Singhal

Tel. #: +971 4 4267 681
Mob.#: +971 56 454 2978
Shubhra.Singhal@me.knightfrank.com

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