

Press Release



Ministry of Health and Welfare,
Republic of Korea

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Vitalization of K-Medical Cooperation with Middle Eastern Countries

□ The Ministry of Health and Welfare(Minister: Cho, KyooHong) announced that it would hold a meeting with the ambassadors of the Gulf Cooperation Council (hereinafter ‘GCC’)* to the Republic of Korea to promote healthcare cooperation at the Westin Chosun Hotel(located in Jung-gu, Seoul) at 2:00 PM on Mar. 10(Fri.).

* A regional cooperation organization formed in May 1981 by oil producing countries in the Gulf region to strengthen regional cooperation.

○ The event was attended by Minister Cho KyooHong, Korea Health Industry Development Institute President Cha Soon-do, and the United Arab Emirates’ ambassador(hereinafter referred to as “UAE”) Abdulla Saif Al-Nuaimi, the Omani ambassador Zakaria Hamed Al-Saadi, the Saudi Arabian ambassador Sami M. Alsadhan, the Qatar ambassador Khalid Ebrahim Al-Hamar, and the Kuwaiti ambassador Deyab Farhan Al-Rashidi.

□ Looking at the current status of cooperation with GCC countries in the Middle East, about 1,400 foreign national patients* visited Korea for treatment from GCC countries in the Middle East in 2021, there are a total of 11 Korean medical institutions that have entered the region**(as of 2021), including the commissioned operation of Seoul National University Hospital's UAE Sheikh Khalifa Specialty Hospital.

* Number of foreign national patients visiting Korea from GCC countries: ('19) 7,263 → ('20) 1,379 → ('21) 1,407 people

Total number of foreign national patients: ('19) 497,464 → ('20) 117,069 → ('21) 145,842 people

** Wooridul Hospital, Ondental Clinic, Seoul National University Hospital, Sky Dental Clinic, Gangnam Leaders Dermatology Clinic, KOREHAB Clinic, Bupyeong Himchan Hospital, Ahnkang Hospital, Nanoori Hospital, Al Ain Korean Spine Center, Asan Medical Center

○ In addition, it is promoting various cooperation in the health and medical fields, such as operating medical training programs* for doctors and dentists in Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Bahrain, and Oman.

* KMTP(Korea Medical Training Program): As of the end of 2014-22, a total of 260 people completed the course(248 from Saudi Arabia, 5 from Kuwait, 5 from Oman, 2 from Bahrain)

□ This meeting was held to discuss follow-up measures following President Yoon Suk Yeol's state visit to the UAE in January this year to expand cooperation in the health and medical fields and to promote mutual understanding, such as advances of Korean medical institutions in major Middle Eastern countries and training programs for medical personnel in the Middle East.

○ The two sides discussed strengthening existing cooperative projects, such as revising the memorandum of understanding(MOU) for health and medical cooperation in each country of the GCC, training medical personnel, overseas expansion of medical institutions, and commissioned treatment for government patients.

- Highlighting the global competitiveness of Korean medical service, the Ministry of Health and Welfare asked for continued support of the GCC ambassadors in seeking opportunities to expand cooperation in the healthcare field, including the field of pharmaceuticals and medical devices, and the entry of medical personnel into the Middle East.

- Minister Cho, KyooHong said, "GCC countries are Korea's important cooperative partners, and it is very meaningful to have good opportunities to promote exchanges, such as the Saudi Crown Prince's visit to Korea last November and the President's visit to the UAE in January this year."
- He also emphasized, "In particular, the health sector is one of the promising future industries that will coexist with the Middle East along with hydrogen and AI, and I hope that it will present a promising opportunity to continue active exchanges and cooperation in the healthcare field between Korea and GCC countries to improve public health and create mutual benefits."
- In his reply, on behalf of the ambassadors attending the meeting, the UAE's ambassador, Abdulla Saif Al-Nuaimi said, "Today's meeting was a meaningful occasion to confirm the roadmap of cooperation in the healthcare field between the UAE, the Middle East and Korea, and I look forward to all sides meeting frequently and working closely through many opportunities in the future."
- As the COVID-19 situation stabilizes domestically and globally, the Ministry of Health and Welfare plans to actively promote international cooperation in the medical field, and it is expected that the scale of overseas expansion of medical institutions, enlistment of foreign national patients, and training of medical personnel will gradually recover to a pre-COVID-19 level.
- The Ministry of Health and Welfare plans to continue communication with GCC countries to strengthen health and medical cooperation activities with this meeting serving as a launch point.