

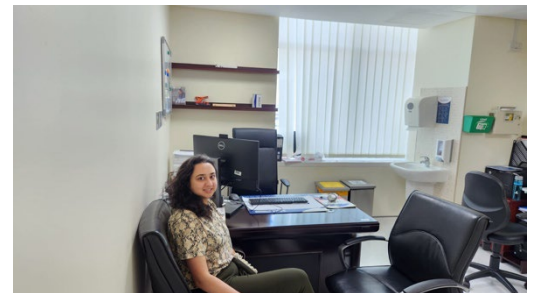
A Medical Student's Journey Through Dubai's Healthcare System

As a medical student immersed in the National Health Service (NHS) in the UK, where patients receive care without the burden of financial concerns, my experience in Dubai's private healthcare system was both fascinating and enlightening. I had the privilege of shadowing medical professionals at Al-Zahra Hospital and a private clinic, gaining invaluable insight into an insurance-based system while exploring the vibrant city of Dubai.



My placement offered a stark contrast to the NHS model. In Dubai, insurance companies play a pivotal role in influencing the scope of medical care. Physicians often find their clinical decisions shaped by what the patient's insurance will cover. While alternative treatments could be suggested, these often required out-of-pocket payments, placing financial considerations at the forefront of healthcare delivery. This dynamic added a layer of complexity to clinical practice, where treatment plans were not only guided by medical judgment but also constrained by

economic factors. It was striking to witness how financial structures could influence patient care, presenting both opportunities and challenges.



Within the private clinic, I shadowed an internal medicine doctor and observed a unique challenge: the issue of continuity of care. In Dubai, many patients engage in "doctor shopping," visiting multiple clinics and specialists in search of second opinions or alternative treatments. This practice, while offering patients a variety of perspectives, often disrupted the consistency of care. It stood in contrast to the NHS, where patients may encounter different doctors within the same institution but still operate within a unified system. In Dubai, the lack of a centralised healthcare framework meant that patients' medical histories were often fragmented, which could hinder the development of long-term patient-doctor relationships and cohesive treatment plans.

Beyond the clinical setting, I was captivated by Dubai's remarkable blend of tradition and modernity. The city's transformation from a desert landscape to a global metropolis was awe-inspiring. I marvelled at its futuristic skyline, world-class infrastructure, and cultural vibrancy. My leisure time was equally memorable, with a lively session at Topgolf and a serene morning on the beach offering a glimpse into the diverse experiences Dubai has to offer. The city's dedication to innovation and luxury was evident in every corner, from its towering skyscrapers to its meticulously designed public spaces. Reflecting on my time in Dubai, I gained a deeper understanding of how healthcare systems operate within different economic and cultural contexts. The NHS prioritises universal access and equity, while Dubai's system emphasises choice, efficiency, and speed, albeit within the constraints of insurance coverage. Each system has its strengths and limitations, and experiencing this firsthand has broadened my perspective as a future physician. I now better appreciate the delicate balance between clinical excellence and financial realities, a challenge that healthcare providers around the world must navigate.

