

Browne Jacobson contributes to report promoting greater UAE-UK collaboration in cancer care

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A Browne Jacobson lawyer has played a key role in the launch of a report that aims to improve cancer care via greater collaboration between the United Arab Emirates and United Kingdom.

Gerard Hanratty, Head of Health and Life Sciences at the UK and Ireland law firm, contributed to a section on barriers and opportunities regarding data sharing and privacy in the UAE-UK Business Council's white paper.

Titled Opportunities for collaboration between the UK and UAE in cancer care, it provides a series of recommendations for developing new prevention, screening and diagnostics strategies that can help tackle cancer on a collaborative basis.

Artificial intelligence (AI) and other emerging technologies are earmarked as having a central role to play in improving the accuracy and speed of diagnostics, as well as the efficacy of treatment.

UAE-UK collaboration in this field requires effective cross-border data sharing and a regulatory ecosystem geared towards maximising the potential for joint projects.

Using his expertise in public law and regulatory issues in health and life sciences, Gerard provided views about how to overcome legal hurdles in the exchange of personal data, which is crucial to developing joint research projects and clinical trials, as well as the adoption of innovative technologies such as AI and genomics in cancer care.

Gerard, who was a panel speaker at the Council's UAE-UK Cancer Summit in Dubai earlier this year, said: "An ambition for the firm is to support clients who are working at the forefront of society's biggest issues, and there are fewer such issues than tackling cancer given that there were more than 19 million new diagnoses globally in 2020.

"The growing trading relationship between the UAE and UK is providing significant investment into health and life sciences, offering enormous opportunities for greater collaboration in cancer care research and development.

"With many regulatory challenges to overcome, however, this report provides some strong recommendations for how our countries can develop a comprehensive and flexible framework for co-operation and alignment in data sharing and governance.

"Another key objective should be for the UK and UAE to work together to achieve recognition of the UAE's federal data regime as adequate to other international jurisdictions.

By achieving data adequacy and implementing an enabling regulatory regime, our countries can begin to collaborate more effectively in harnessing big data and AI towards what should be our ultimate goal – the game-changing development of personalised cancer prevention, screening and diagnostics strategies based on individual patient characteristics such as genetics, lifestyle factors and medical history."

The data regulatory framework proposed by the white paper would consider the different legal and cultural contexts, existing and emerging international standards and best practices, and the specific needs and interests of the health and research sectors.

To assist such a framework, the paper suggests a series of potential areas and projects for collaboration and innovation. These include the development of a UAE-UK health data hub, the harmonisation of ethical and technical guidelines for AI and genomics, and the facilitation of cross-border clinical trials and research partnerships.

To achieve this, it recommends the UAE and UK establish a joint committee or forum composed of representatives from the relevant ministries, health authorities, academic institutions and private sector entities. This would be used to define the vision and objectives, set priorities and action plans, and mobilise shared resources and support.

The paper concludes with recommendations to government, business, academia and other stakeholders within health and life sciences on how to bring emerging collaborative opportunities to fruition.

Lord Ajay Kakkar, emeritus professor of surgery at University College London, and HE Dr Maha Barakat, Assistant Minister for Health and Life Sciences in the UAE Ministry of Foreign Affairs, are co-chairs of the Council's campaign for greater collaboration between the UAE and UK in cancer care.

In the report, they write: "The UAE and the UK are at similar stages in their respective journeys in terms of developing new strategies for tackling cancer and overcoming the barriers that stand in our way.

"One of those challenges relates to prevention, screening and diagnostics. This is broad in scope, ranging from how to encourage people to follow a healthier lifestyle and present themselves earlier for screening (and how we can effectively take screening providers out to the community), to how we can harness AI and other emerging technologies to improve the accuracy and speed of diagnostics and the efficacy of treatment.

"For UK-UAE collaboration in cancer prevention, research and treatment to flourish, an enabling environment for the exchange of data between both countries is necessary, along with a regulatory ecosystem geared towards maximising the potential for joint projects."

The trade and investment relationship between the two countries is now worth about £25bn per year, representing an annual increase of nearly 50%.

The UAE is the UK's 19th biggest trading partner and its 12th largest export market. There has been significant investment in healthcare in both directions since the UK-UAE Partnership for The Future and Sovereign Investment Partnership agreements were signed by both countries in 2021.

Much of this investment reflects the rapid pace of innovation, research and adoption of new technologies such as AI in the life sciences sector in the UK and UAE.

[Opportunities for collaboration between the UK and UAE in cancer care report](#) →

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