



BRIDGING THE GAP

Advancing Colorectal Cancer Care in Saudi Arabia

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Saudi Arabia has made significant progress in colorectal cancer (CRC) care, supported by government investment in healthcare infrastructure, early detection programs, and availability of advanced treatments in major hospitals. Organized awareness campaigns and growing access to molecular diagnostics highlight the country's commitment to improving outcomes. However, challenges remain in expanding nationwide screening participation, addressing regional disparities, and strengthening survivorship care.

With a **Level 3 – Advanced** maturity, Saudi Arabia is positioned to build a comprehensive and equitable colorectal cancer framework.

INTRODUCTION

Progress Through Investment and Modernization

Colorectal cancer is one of the most common cancers in Saudi Arabia, affecting both men and women. The country has leveraged strong government commitment to non-communicable disease control, ensuring availability of diagnostic and treatment services in leading tertiary hospitals. Pilot screening programs and awareness initiatives have been introduced, though uptake remains inconsistent. While access to advanced therapies—including biologics and targeted treatments—is growing, costs and unequal distribution limit availability for some patients.

To achieve optimal outcomes, Saudi Arabia must now focus on strengthening national-level coordination and ensuring equity of access across all regions.





COLORECTAL CANCER IN SAUDI ARABIA

Current Landscape and Strategic Gaps

Pillar	Current Status	Strength	Policy Action
Early Detection & Diagnosis	Pilot screening programs exist using FIT and colonoscopy, but not yet scaled to full national coverage. Uptake remains below desired levels.	Strong diagnostic facilities in major tertiary hospitals.	Scale up to a nationwide screening program, ensure FIT availability in primary care, and increase public awareness to drive participation.
Biomarker & Molecular Testing	KRAS, NRAS, and BRAF testing available in major oncology centers; access is limited in smaller hospitals.	Advanced molecular testing infrastructure in leading cancer institutes.	Expand biomarker testing to all major regions and include reimbursement in national insurance.
Treatment Access	Comprehensive access to surgery, chemotherapy, and radiotherapy in tertiary hospitals; biologics and immunotherapies available but expensive.	High investment in tertiary cancer care hospitals (e.g., King Faisal, King Fahad).	Broaden access to innovative therapies through national procurement and insurance reimbursement.
Clinical Guidelines & Quality Standards	National guidelines exist and align with international standards (ESMO/NCCN); implementation strongest in top centers.	Experienced oncology workforce.	Ensure uniform adoption across all regions with training and monitoring systems.
Palliative & Survivorship Care	Palliative care services integrated into major hospitals; survivorship care is limited and not standardized.	Growing investment in palliative medicine.	Develop structured survivorship programs, including rehabilitation, dietary and lifestyle support, and psychological counseling.



CONCLUSION & Call to Action

Saudi Arabia has developed an advanced infrastructure for colorectal cancer care, but national-level scaling and equity remain priorities. By strengthening screening, broadening diagnostic and treatment access, and expanding survivorship programs, the country can build a truly comprehensive CRC response.

KEY POLICY PRIORITIES

1

Expand National Screening Coverage: Transition from pilot programs to a fully funded nationwide CRC screening initiative.

2

Ensure Universal Diagnostic Access: Make biomarker and molecular testing routine and fully reimbursed under public insurance.

3

Improve Access to Advanced Therapies: Scale national procurement systems to ensure affordable access to biologics and immunotherapies.

4

Standardize Clinical Practices: Monitor implementation of national guidelines and strengthen multidisciplinary approaches across all regions.

5

Develop Survivorship Care Models: Introduce nationwide survivorship frameworks covering nutrition, rehabilitation, and psychological support.

CONCLUSION

With **Level 3 – Advanced maturity**, Saudi Arabia's colorectal cancer system has a solid foundation built on investment, infrastructure, and specialist expertise. By scaling national screening, ensuring equitable access to modern therapies, and prioritizing survivorship, Saudi Arabia can further reduce mortality and improve patient quality of life. A coordinated, well-financed national strategy will be the key driver in advancing toward world-class colorectal cancer care standards.