



BRIDGING THE GAP

Enhancing Equitable Access & Innovation in Gastric Cancer Care in United Arab Emirates

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

UAE has made significant progress in building modern healthcare infrastructure, with world-class hospitals and advanced diagnostic technologies available in leading emirates. However, gastric cancer outcomes remain limited by late detection, inconsistent integration of biomarker testing, and disparities in access to innovative treatments across public and private sectors.

Survivorship and palliative care services are also uneven. This policy brief highlights key gaps and reforms needed to advance the UAE's gastric cancer maturity.

INTRODUCTION

Leveraging Advanced Infrastructure While Closing Gaps

With its strong investment in healthcare innovation and advanced medical facilities, the UAE is well-positioned to strengthen gastric cancer care. Yet the disease is often diagnosed late, and equitable access to early detection, molecular testing, and targeted therapies remains fragmented between emirates and between public and private settings.

At a **Level 3 – Emerging** gastric cancer maturity, the UAE can accelerate progress by ensuring nationwide standards, equitable access, and integrated survivorship care.





GASTRIC CANCER IN THE UAE

Current Landscape and Strategic Gaps

Pillar	Current Status	Strength	Policy Action
Early Detection & Diagnosis	No national GC screening; most cases diagnosed symptomatically at advanced stages. Endoscopy capacity strong in major hospitals but less accessible in smaller emirates.	Advanced diagnostic technology in tertiary centres in Abu Dhabi and Dubai.	Implement a national referral framework with clear triage for alarm symptoms; improve awareness campaigns; expand endoscopy access in all emirates through mobile/ endoscopy outreach programs.
Biomarker & Molecular Testing	HER2/MSI testing available in private and tertiary centres but not standardized or guaranteed for all patients.	Advanced pathology labs and partnerships with international providers already exist.	Mandate biomarker testing for advanced GC; establish national lab standards; subsidize costs under public insurance to ensure access for all patients.
Treatment Access	Surgery and peri-operative chemotherapy widely available; access to targeted therapies (trastuzumab, immunotherapy) varies by insurance and emirate.	World-class surgical and oncology facilities in Abu Dhabi and Dubai.	Harmonize national reimbursement for targeted therapies; ensure inclusion under public insurance; expand access to multidisciplinary care in smaller emirates.
Clinical Guidelines	No unified national gastric cancer guidelines; reliance on international protocols at hospital level.	Strong oncology expertise and adoption of global best practice in leading centres.	Develop UAE-specific gastric cancer guidelines, endorsed nationally; train clinicians across emirates; monitor adherence through audits.
Palliative & Survivorship Care	Palliative care developing, but integration into oncology is inconsistent; survivorship support (nutrition, psychosocial care) limited outside major hospitals.	Government initiatives expanding palliative networks; cultural openness increasing.	Embed early palliative referral into care pathway; expand community-based palliative programs; integrate survivorship clinics offering nutritional, psychological, and rehabilitation services.



CONCLUSION & Call to Action

The UAE's advanced healthcare system provides a strong base for improving gastric cancer care, but addressing fragmentation and ensuring equitable access are crucial. Key priorities include establishing a national care pathway, making biomarker testing publicly covered, aligning treatment access and reimbursement across emirates, expanding palliative and survivorship services, and strengthening data reporting to track outcomes.

KEY POLICY PRIORITIES

- 1 Launch a National GC Pathway:** Standardize alarm-symptom criteria, referral targets, and time-to-treatment goals.
- 2 Guarantee Molecular Testing:** Mandate HER2/MSI testing for advanced disease and subsidize under public insurance.
- 3 Ensure Equitable Access to Therapies:** Harmonize reimbursement for targeted treatments across emirates.
- 4 Expand Palliative & Survivorship Care:** Integrate early palliative care and survivorship programs into oncology services nationwide.
- 5 Strengthen Data & Accountability:** Improve the cancer registry and publish emirate-level outcomes dashboards.

CONCLUSION

The UAE has the infrastructure and expertise to deliver world-class gastric cancer care but must close gaps in consistency, equity, and integration. By standardizing pathways, ensuring universal access to biomarker testing and advanced therapies, and embedding survivorship and palliative care, the UAE can move toward a patient-centred system that guarantees timely, equitable, and effective gastric cancer care across all emirates.