

December 2019

# Kuwait Healthcare

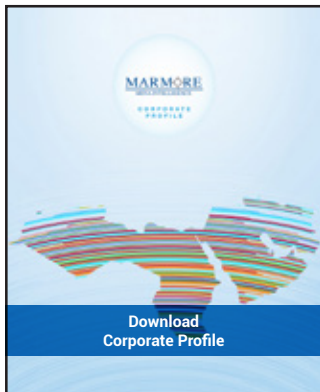
Emerging Era of Advanced  
Care, Efficiencies, Market  
Prices and Infrastructure  
Enhancement

## Research Highlights:

The report examines Kuwait's healthcare sector performance measured by healthcare indicators, its infrastructure and productivity, across time, ownership, and country's borders, assesses where it stands and where it is heading, which healthcare needs are growing, government initiatives to enhance private participation, and challenges to be addressed to reach the government's goal for universal quality healthcare coverage.



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- » Consistent track record of quality, in-depth research offerings;
- » Skilled team with extensive experience in advanced quantitative and qualitative analysis techniques;
- » Deep understanding of MENA market and access to wide-ranging database
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# Executive Summary

Kuwait healthcare sector has been nurtured for many decades by the government through the Ministry of Health (MOH) and Ministry of Defense and Petroleum Company hospitals. Though not at the top in global rankings, the country's healthcare sector has reached a fair degree of maturity whether it is the number of beds installed, the number of physicians, dentists or nurses available. The same can be said of other health indicators for the country's population like life expectancy at birth, child mortality rate, measures of eradication of communicable diseases, professional assistance available for child birth, deaths due to injuries, and availability of health insurance (including insurance provided by private & government). The country compares favorably with its GCC peers on many counts. No doubt, scope for further enhancement exists.

Kuwait is categorized as a high-income country by World Bank for comparing healthcare indicators globally. Comparison of Kuwait with its peers in North American and European countries, shows that there is a need to address many challenges that leave gaps in its healthcare ecosystem. The country's healthcare system depends to a large extent on services of expatriate doctors and nurses. The country's medical educational institutions require to be developed so that the national pool of medical professionals, that form the backbone of the country's healthcare needs, is sufficiently created and sustained.

While the country has successfully controlled fatalities from communicable diseases like malaria, tuberculosis, fatalities from non-communicable diseases like heart disease, stroke, cancer are increasing due to lifestyle, dietary and genetic disorders. This points towards requirement of greater investment in the local hospitals to treat these diseases and deploying more specialized medical professionals to handle such treatment. Also, the country provides large financial support for its citizens for healthcare treatment at overseas hospitals. This is done if the treatment cannot be administered within the country. This shows there is need for greater sophistication and expertise in the local hospitals.

Kuwait has several private hospitals due to the government's initiative for encouraging private sector participation. However, a lot needs to be done on this front, as about 80% of the health expenditure continues to be met by government. The government recognizes the need for action to reduce dependence of the sector on government finances. Experience shows that private sector hospitals are preferred over government hospitals by many nationals. This is despite nationals having access to free medical care at government hospitals. The government on its part has taken public private partnership for the sector seriously as demonstrated by forming Dhaman a partnership with private sector that is setting up 3 hospitals and several clinics exclusively for handling the healthcare needs of the over 2 million expat population employed in the private sector. Expatriates account for over three fourths of the country's population. The progress that has been made in private sector participation in the sector can be further taken forward by privatizing some of the government hospitals.

Health insurance is open to private sector and government sponsored health insurance schemes are also in place. The recent policy to restrict access for expatriates to government hospitals that were providing subsidized healthcare, has yielded greater interest in private sector health insurance schemes from the residents. Information & Communication Technology (ICT) has a big role to play in healthcare and this is at an infant stage currently in Kuwait.

Kuwaiti pharmaceutical and medical equipment industry are still very small and need to grow many times for a self-sustainable healthcare system in the country.

The MOH hospitals have in place arrangement with advanced healthcare institutions overseas for imbibing the spirit of research in its hospitals. However, research and development infrastructure for the sector may need to be enhanced and accelerated through both private and government institutions.

All in all, government's role in Kuwait's healthcare sector may be at a turning point, as it has set in place initiatives for greater public private partnerships in healthcare, and for adopting wider coverage of health insurance, and greater use of ICT in healthcare. If, funds are freed from lower investments in hospital infrastructure, the government can be expected to do more in other areas of healthcare. These are the likes of medical education, medical research and development of the pharmaceutical and building engineering skills required by medical equipment sector. The steps taken or being taken currently, bode well for the sustainability of the sector and its transition to the next stage of enhanced quality, and higher productivity.

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