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Putting Saudi Arabia on the Clinical Trial map:

KAIMRC's new initiative stands to kickstart Saudi Arabia's clinical trials economy, and find treatments for its people.

Despite a population of nearly 33 million and a variety of excellent research centers that attract academics from across the globe, Saudi Arabia doesn't conduct nearly enough clinical trials. This fact was the core of a KAIMRC-led initiative: The National Command Center for Clinical Trials, managed through the Saudi Clinical Trials Enterprise (SCTE) and sponsored by the National Industrial Development and Logistics Program (NIDLP). This initiative is part of the National Vision 2030 initiatives. In January 2020 the initiative was funded with SAR 50 million and was earmarked as one of the country's top initiatives in the pharmaceutical sector by H.E. Bandar AlKhorayef the Minister of Industry and Mineral Resources Industry and Mineral Resources.

The initiative was inspired by the success of the clinical trials enterprise in Korea, called KoNECT (the Korea National Enterprise for Clinical Trials) says Abdelali Haoudi, KAIMRC's head of strategy and business development. In less than 10 years South Korea has transformed its unexceptional clinical trials profile into that of a world leader, explains Haoudi. KoNECT is now a close partner to the KAIMRC initiative. The SCTE which includes in its advisory board, representatives from different medical centers and government agencies in the country, is hoping that they can replicate South Korea's exceptional growth in KSA. The architects of the Saudi-South Korea partnership hope their work will also deepen ties between the two countries.



The SCTE aims to increase the quality and quantity of clinical trials conducted within Saudi Arabia through two main approaches; one aimed to contribute to enhancing the kingdom's legal and regulatory framework to expedite processing clinical trials requests, and the other to train and retain the necessary talents. It, also, prioritizes attracting and maintaining clinical trials expertise within the country by attracting international pharmaceutical industry to participate in clinical trials in the country, says the project's lead, Shuruq Al Yousef.

Saudi patients, perhaps, will be the biggest benefactors of the SCTE. With the current lack of sufficient number of clinical trials in the country, there remains a largely underexploited opportunity to tailor treatments to conditions arising from Saudi-specific genetics. An investment in Saudi clinical trials will inevitably lead to new treatments and interventions able to transform the lives of Saudi citizens. There is a long road ahead before this goal is realized, but KAIMRC in partnership with other local academic medical centers, is making daily progress. "Hopefully, this will help set up the ecosystem that leads to facilitating local industrial drug development, manufacturing, and commercialization," says Haoudi. "Let's take it one step at a time."





NIDLP aims to Transform Saudi Arabia's economy

The National Industrial Development and Logistics Program (NIDLP) aims to transform the Kingdom into an international leading industrial and Logistics powerhouse for a number of strategic industrial areas, two of which is the field of pharmaceutical industry and medical devices industry.

To achieve this goal, NIDLP continuously organizes workshops to share updates and engage with different stakeholders in order to ensure the alignment with the national vision 2030 goals. KAIMRC has participated in these workshops set up by NIDLP to update the implementation plan for pharmaceuticals and medical devices industries taking into consideration current gaps, unmet needs and future goals in alignment with the National Vision 2030 goals. The workshops included many leading national organizations and institutions in these fields, Some of which are focused on research and development and innovation, others on industrial development and others on regulatory and policy development. This important step resulted in a number of recommendations by experts in this field.





The recommendations were mainly centered around the following:

1

To set up of dedicated infrastructure

2

To enhance current regulatory and legislative framework

3

To coordinate and to unify efforts of multiple government agencies and the private sector

4

To provide training and capacity building opportunities

KAIMRC's Partnership with Fujifilm to start clinical trial of Avigan to treat COVID-19

The current COVID19 pandemic with its devastating impact on health and economy around the globe has made it a priority for the research and industrial community to multiply their efforts to come up with new rapid diagnostic solutions, vaccines and therapeutics modalities to face this pandemic.

KAIMRC is currently leading over 120 different R&D and innovation projects ranging from basic biomedical research investigations, through clinical trial and public health projects.



As part of KAIMRC COVID19 R&D agenda, we are conducting two clinical trials to test a potential new therapeutic solution using Avigan (Favipiravir) as a part of a partnership with FUJIFILM Co. KAIMRC is testing this antiviral drug that was previously used to treat influenza. Favipiravir, also, sold under the brand name (Avigan) was developed and manufactured by Toyama Chemical (Fujifilm Group) and was approved for medical use in Japan in 2014. FUJIFILM Co. provided KAIMRC with Avigan drug to test its efficacy and safety to treat COVID-19 patients in two clinical trials led by Dr. Mohammed Bosaeed, a renowned clinician at MNG-HA. The first clinical trial, FACCT, is a trial with a combination of of Favipiravir and Hydroxychloroquine in Adults Hospitalized with moderate and severe Covid-19.

The second clinical trial, Avi-mild, is a trial of Favipiravir therapy in Adults with mild Coronavirus Disease COVID-19.



KAIMRC Initiative Management Office is in the green zone based on ADAA, The National Center Performance Measurement

The Ministry of National Guard Health Affairs (MNG-HA) is leading one of the national vision 2030 initiatives dedicated to the set up of a National Command Center for Clinical Trials. This initiative is being coordinated by King Abdullah International Medical Research Center (KAIMRC) with the participation of a number of national medical centers and governmental agencies as well as pharmaceutical industry representatives.

To ensure continuous monitoring of the performance and progress of the national initiatives, the national center ADAA tracks these initiatives performance. ADAA, the National Center for Performance Measurement in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is an independent government body, founded on the 20th of October 2015 by the Council of Ministers, based on the recommendation of the Council of Economic and Development Affairs.

ADAA aims to build and initialize performance measurement processes in public entities by providing the necessary support through the utilization of unified tools and models that assist public entities in their ability and efficiency to deliver better performance. ADAA publishes quarterly reports on delivery progress of strategic goals, initiatives and KPIs of public entities to track their development in realizing Saudi vision 2030, in addition to measuring beneficiary satisfaction on public services.

At MNG-HA/KAIMRC, we have regularly been receiving high performance through ADAA quarterly reports by meeting the deadlines and completing the Initiative KPIs and milestones by 100%. This a testament of MNG-HA/KAIMRC's capabilities to effectively contribute to the national vision 2030 goals.

