

Health System in Iraq

By

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1- How was the health system in Iraq like?

- **Pros:**

- No long waiting periods for appointments, every step in health procedure can be done in the same day (which results in early diagnosis, investigation, and treatment before complications occur).
- Public hospitals are nearly free of charge (maximum amount paid would approximately be equivalent to one Australian dollar).
- Patients can see a specialist straight away if needed.
- Much less complications with paperwork.
- Available for everyone.
- Medications are much easier to get, which helps for chronic diseases but also can be dangerous concerning antibiotics.
- It would be considered unethical and sometimes unallowed if the doctor leaves and there are still patients waiting, even if he finished his shift, so all patients must be seen.
- Vaccinations are administered to all children for free (MMR, DPT, Oral Polio, BCG for TB). Recently, Rota Virus and Hemophilus Influenzae B has been added with DPT.

1- How was the health system in Iraq like?

- **Cons:**

- Hospitals are not perfectly clean and sterilized.
- Not all treatments are available (equipments, machines, medications), so patients sometimes may have to go to private hospitals or, in many cases, travel abroad.
- Between many clinics and pharmacies there is a certain contract, where the doctor promotes a certain pharmacy making sure the patient would buy from the intended pharmacy by writing the prescription with very bad and encrypted handwriting and symbols that only can be comprehended by that pharmacy.
- Patient's confidentiality is not perfectly protected.
- Knowing people there gets you to see the doctor first even when being late.
- Private hospitals, private clinics, medications from private pharmacies weren't cheap but still reasonable and affordable.
- No health insurance.

2- What expectations have Iraqis brought to the Australian health system?

- Some expected that the health system would be far more advanced.
- Some expected that patients could visit a specialist whenever they wanted.
- Most didn't expect that specialists cost so much.
- Most didn't expect the excessive paperwork that each person had to go through, which they think that it became more important than the patient himself/herself or treating the disease.
- All of them didn't expect the appointments would take that long, which may result in either complications or resolve before the appointment is even due.

3- What have been the surprises and disappointments in the Australian health system?

- **Surprises:**

- There are no deals between clinics and pharmacies in terms of profit-making, so the doctor doesn't obligate the patient to buy the medications from a certain pharmacy.
- Doctors are very open-minded and trustworthy, which makes it safer and more comfortable for the patient to talk about his condition accurately without worrying about being judged and knowing that all information are confidential.
- The free services offered to refugees.
- The advanced software system which facilitates so many things that were considered hardships back in Iraq.
- Each person's profile is stored, so it helps with remembering medications prescribed.
- Everybody is equal in terms of appointments, no one can take your place.
- Approaching the condition step by step and according to health guidelines, which can go both ways (correct but takes time).

3- What have been the surprises and disappointments in the Australian health system?

- **Disappointments:**

- Appointments can take a lot of time, which sometimes can be a serious problem.
- Costs are huge, which most probably cannot be afforded by new comers whose sole income is from Centrelink.
- Excessive paperwork.
- Inability to get medications for chronic diseases without prescriptions.
- Being laws and regulations-oriented rather than patient-oriented, so sometimes laws can overrule patients' needs.

Cases

- A case with a patient who had a simple and small hernia, but it became more serious because the appointment given was after 6 months.
- A case where a swelling in the eyelid resolved before the appointment is due. The patient administered an antihistamine eye drops as a suggestion from the Optometrist, but a referral had also been made to the Ophthalmologist, who charged around 200 dollars just for giving advice like using cold water or salt water.
- A case where an appointment for investigation for a knee joint problem cost 500 dollars, which was more than a fortnight payment from Centrelink, so the patient had to cancel and wait to get free investigation for the knee which was getting worse.
- A case where a patient has a moderate pain in both of his wrists. After taking X-rays and ultra sounds (which took sometime) he was required to do an MRI, but the cost is 300\$ per hand, so he's still waiting for the public hospital appointment to do it for free because he can't afford the private one.



Thank you