



Press Article



Abdul Rahman is just one of the thousands of Emiratis seeking medical care in Thailand.

Al Haji and his son Abdul Rahman with Dr Morley and other surgeons at the Bumrungrad hospital.
Nina Muslim / Gulf News

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What does 'Bumrur mean?

This Thai word - pror Bahm-roong-RAHT - "care for the people"

Where Abdul Rahman found a new life as energetic seven-year-old

Bangkok: Seven-year old Abdul Rahman Hussain Qaid cannot stop running.

A huge smile plastered on the fragile-looking face, he runs up and down the hallways at Bumrungrad Hospital in Bangkok, startling nurses and visitors as he streaks past them.

The speed in which he moves is a novelty - just a month before, he was always out of breath and tired to do anything except loll about like a ragged doll, according to his father, Dubai-based Hussain Qaid Mohammad Al Haji.

"He was a blue baby when he was born," he told Gulf News. "When he was born, he had a condition that was very difficult to repair. I was told to be patient because he would need lots of surgery. Doctors also told me that most times, babies with the condition die."

Abdul Rahman, the youngest of six children, had been born with a single ventricle heart defect, in which oxygen-rich and poor blood is mixed in a single ventricle, causing low oxygen levels and fatigue.

At the age of only seven days, Abdul Rahman underwent his first heart bypass surgery to repair pulmonary hypertension at Mafraq Hospital in Abu Dhabi. The surgery did not work. Abdul Rahman still had pulmonary hypertension.

Al Haji then had a choice to make. Dubai Police, his employer, asked him where he wanted to go to treat his son.

"I didn't trust the doctors in the UAE, so I asked to go to Thailand and [since then] I have kept coming back because I preferred to stay with one doctor," he says.

Abdul Rahman is just one of the thousands of Emiratis seeking medical care in Thailand.

On July 17, 2007, Abdul Rahman finally underwent a surgery that he has been waiting his whole life for.

Paediatric cardiac surgeons at Bumrungrad Hospital performed the Fontan procedure on him to direct oxygen-rich blood into his lungs and organs.

"I was anxious with every operation because he is the baby. But when the doctor came out of the operating theatre with a big smile, it gave me confidence that he is finally all right," says his father Hussain Qaid Mohammad Al Haji.

"Abdul Rahman can now walk and run like a normal child. His appetite is better now," he told Gulf News, adding that he plans to play football with his son soon.

Abdul Rahman sits next to him, rolling his eyes at his father's unusual display of emotion, fidgeting restlessly. Then, as soon as the interview is over, he is off - running like the wind.

Doctors say: No lack of expertise here

Doctors in the private sector blame UAE nationals and residents' penchant for seeking treatment abroad on ignorance of available medical services, opportunism and a trigger-happy media, rather than the lack of medical expertise.

Dr Girish Chandra Varma, consultant cardiothoracic surgeon at NMC Specialist Hospital, told Gulf News that world-class medical treatment in most specialities was available at their doorstep.

"We are all here. We've trained abroad, we've worked abroad and we're here to give service. But some still want to go abroad for treatment," he said.

"I think it's because they are either unaware of the services we have or they know they can get everything for free (from the government) if they go abroad (in the case of UAE nationals)," he added.

Dr Tarek Al Swaify, consultant general and laparoscopic surgeon at International Modern Hospital, has a different take on the situation.

"The problem is the lack of trust in the medical profession, which I blame on the media. Here, medical mishaps are amplified in the media that makes people think we're all the same," he said.

"There are incidents of complications here, but not more than anywhere in the world," he added.

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