

# Interview: Jihad Hussami, Marketing Director EEMEA, Hill-Rom, UAE

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*Jihad Hussami, EEMEA Marketing Director of Hill-Rom, talks about the company's unique model for patient hospital care, the biggest obstacles the company has faced, and how adapting to the culture of the society has likewise led to huge successes.*

## **What have been some of Hill-Rom's strongest activities in the Middle East?**

Hill-Rom has a very strong position in the Middle East markets, mainly in hospital beds. We realized that the best way to support the booming activity throughout the region is by providing a complete solution to match the customer needs, while of course meeting the mandated standards of the ministries of health.

Almost a year and a half ago we began launching our 22-room solution. The concept originated from understanding the culture, because unlike some other regions the family plays an important role within patient care here. Hence, we began dividing the room of the patient into zones: a zone for the family, for the patient, for hygiene, for mobilizing the patient easily and a zone for the nurse where she can work and implement drugs. Alongside the products and the design of the room, this is how we're presenting our 22-room solution and the segregated yet functional, comfortable environment we've been developing.

In terms of designing the room, we have a service called the room builder. We review the CAD drawings of the hospital and then present our best recommendation in regards to patient treatment in an ICU, maternity care, etc.

## **How are these new services being received in general?**

The reception has been very good. One of our largest projects has been with Hamad Medical Corporation in Qatar. We're now working again with Sulaiman Al-Habib Hospitals here in Dubai. From the customer point of view, it is always much better to have a relationship with one company where everything is integrated and works in harmony. Hence, we are really focusing on expanding the 22-room solution.

Even the aesthetics, such as the interior, are very important in this region. Most of the newly built hospitals requested VIP rooms, which is where we have played a role as well. Certain Hill-Rom bed units are designed for the patient not to feel as if they are in a hospital. All the equipment needed for the patient is concealed, since comfort is associated with healing benefits. It is a win-win situation for the hospital management to have the best design and for the patient to heal faster.

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## **Are your main clients in the private sector hospitals then?**

Our clients consist of both public and private hospitals, depending on the country. The private sector is stronger in the Emirates, while in Saudi or Kuwait for example, we work a lot with the Ministries of Health because the projects are coming from the public sector.

## **Thus far, what has been the evolution of the regional health sector and more specifically of the hospitals?**

The regional ministries of health have realized the importance of developing the healthcare system, and it is Hill-Rom's role to support them.

I believe it's going in the right direction. The plan for the region by 2020 is to add almost 100,000 beds, which is the number needed to match the international standards of beds per number of people. If by that year we reach the numbers that are forecasted, the standards will certainly rise.

## **Out of these 100,000 beds, how many will Hill-Rom be providing?**

We are investing heavily in the region as an organization, and already have a strong position in the market. In addition, the educational services that Hill-Rom provides are also conducive to incremental growth.

Just two years ago Hill-Rom was in a small office in Jebel Ali. The company now moved to Dubai HealthCare City and also opened a training center on the premises. This center is not only for our business partners, but also for our customers and users. We established the "Booster Program," which is a series of programs that we run on a monthly basis focused on advancing the knowledge of caregivers in order to help their patients. It is a trickle-down effect, since after certification for the completion of the three-day training, the caregivers return to their respective hospitals and help implement the programs.

One of the programs is called "no falls," which helps reduce the number of falls in hospitals. "Progressive mobility" is a program for early mobilization of patients within the ICU environment. There have been many studies done in the US and Europe about the importance of getting patients outside of beds as soon as possible for improved health outcomes, so we are now working with three hospitals to implement this program. We also offer "safe patient handling" to prevent accidents.

## **You mentioned the aim to reach world-class standards in terms of health care provision here in the region; what do you foresee as the major challenges?**

The two obstacles I foresee is time and human capital.

Building hospitals with the highest standard quality is time consuming. In terms of workforce, nurses are already becoming a very scarce resource worldwide. Although we are assembling good packages to attract nurses to come here, education comes hand-in-hand because we are targeting double the standard.

Also, given that the majority of resources are expatriates, a high turn over is inevitable. So, the challenge later could be maintaining the standard and quality through the phase of high turn over of employees. We can offset this hurdle by implementing more training programs and working with organizations, which can also contribute to reinforcing skill.

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We are already playing this role with our monthly Booster Program, but it is difficult to retain personnel who are only here on short-term contracts. So that is the biggest challenge— how to make sure that you’re educating the next persons replacement and other hospital staff.

**It is frequently said that the UAE will eventually serve as a model healthcare system for the rest of the region, and it is also the aim of the government to become recognized as the best in treatment, with the most excellent hospitals and doctors. Is this a reality? And consequently, do you think that the UAE has good chance of becoming a medical tourism hub?**

It is already on its way of becoming the reality because of the level of investment, for one. We can also see this from the focus this country has on quality and products and attracting the right resources.

In terms of medical tourism, if the government will continue moving at the same rate then it should not take long because Dubai is a huge transit center. They just need to make some additions in order to make it a medical tourism hub. A lot of patients travel around the world for treatment: Germany for bone surgeries, Russia for eye surgeries, and many other countries. Why not Dubai then? Dubai is now a ubiquitous tourist destination, so it won’t be difficult to build on that especially with the advertising underway right now.

**What role do you want Hill-Rom to play in this vision of the Emirates’ future?**

The key role we want to continue to play is to ensure that we carry on providing education, so we’re investing in this area by adding resources and more trainers. We’re building up “Train the Trainer” programs because as the number of hospitals increase, we need to anchor a few trainers in the hospitals that will be responsible for the entire hospital.

This is Hill-Rom’s great differentiator because technology and solutions are nothing without the proper education. This is one of the main issues I faced when I joined Hill-Rom— although a hospital could have our most sophisticated bed, they might only be using 50% of that sophistication. So why did they purchase such a high-tech bed when they could have easily paid for a simpler bed? Initially, the person who made the decision had intended to use the products in full capacity, but the caregivers and the nurses are not capable of doing so due to the lack of sufficient training or rotation. So we realized if we trained the nurses to utilize the bed to 100% capacity, they would enjoy using it, which would cure the patient quicker since they would benefit from using the full options of the bed.

**If we fast-forward five years from now, what would the Hill-Rom story be?**

The office will be much larger for one, and then we will add more integrated training strategies. Today the training is more theoretical and we do it by means of a presentations followed by demonstrations. In the future, I would like to enhance the training by using more realistic models, on patients for example. If we really want to make sure that we get the right level of education into the hospitals, we need to better apply the technology to transfer the information to the students.

The great thing about Hill-Rom is that they are in the right game. Maybe in five years when all those 100,000 beds are completed and the business starts slowing down, the picture will be different. But the way we’re building our product offering is by being able to tap into various hospital demographics. Within the same country, and even within the same hospital, there is demand for sophisticated beds and also very basic beds.

In terms of widening Hill-Rom’s portfolio, we are planning to complement the 22-room solution. Just recently we launched a device that can track hand hygiene so that when the nurse enters

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patients rooms, the system will recognize if she washed her hands or not.

This is precisely where we want to go with part of the businessâ?? linking the 22-room solution to infection control, to hospital information systems, etc. Our new smart beds are connected to the hospital information systems and to the nursesâ?? workstations, which allows for efficient monitoring. While these systems are available in the US, in this region they are not. And although the ministry of health has already expressed interest, we are taking it step by step and not offering any solutions before we can guarantee that it is complete.

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