



Mr. Alaa Adel

Managing Director for Cerner in the Middle East and Africa

“Digitalization shapes the future of our industry and allows our clients to secure better performance in providing healthcare services”

Thirty years since the birth of Cerner in the Middle East, the company has contributed to many innovative changes in healthcare delivery. It has around 300 employees and serves healthcare organizations in seven different countries in the region. On that occasion, ‘Hospitals’ magazine met with Alaa Adel, managing director for Cerner in the Middle East and Africa for his valuable insights about leadership attributes and driving innovation in the industry in fair weather or foul.

Can you brief us about your career?

I have been working in the healthcare field for the past 15 years. I joined Cerner in 2009 and I’ve held various roles within the company starting in the Middle East, then relocated to our head office in Kansas City for five years where I was part of the first healthcare information and management system society. I am currently the managing director for Cerner in the Middle East and Africa working with an amazing team to support our clients and partners in the region.

In your opinion, what are the qualities of a good leader?

In my opinion, the most important quality of a good leader is empathy with a wide contextual perspective. Leadership is about inspiring people to do things they never thought they could do. Being people-oriented, building trust among

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your people and the power of delegation are crucial to a leader’s core responsibilities. I also believe effective leadership and communication are intertwined. You need to be able to communicate in a variety of ways, from transmitting information to coaching your people. The quality and effectiveness of communication across your organization directly affect the success of your business strategy, too.

Congratulations for Cerner’s 30th anniversary in the region, can you tell us about the reforms or improvements that Cerner has brought to the healthcare sector over the years?

We are extremely honored to have been present in the region for 30 years and would not have been successful without visionary country

leaders, clients and partners who trust and work closely with us. Our core belief is building a seamless and connected world where everyone thrives. Cerner started in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia with one client and four employees. Today we are proud to have around 300 employees and a presence in seven countries: UAE, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Egypt, Kuwait, Jordan and Oman.

Thirty years might seem like a long time, but it has flown by quite quickly for us. Our aim is to support healthcare facilities throughout their digital transformation journeys; focusing on leveraging health information technologies (HIT) to enhance the experience of patients and healthcare workforce, all while improving the health of the population and reducing the mounting costs of healthcare.

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Over the past two years, the world has faced an unprecedented pandemic. What can you tell us about Cerner’s role during this unprecedented time?

The past two years have been challenging. Everything has changed and COVID-19 affected everyone and everything. However, the pandemic has fast-forwarded and accelerated our vision realization and implemented in a few months what was planned for years.

Cerner has been working closely with clients in the region optimize our clients’ electronic health record (EHR) systems with the most recent and applicable developments from across the globe. This includes operational readiness, screening, testing, treating, monitoring, public health surveillance and other clinical activities to help our clients respond to the pandemic. Moreover, we have implemented end-to-end Cerner solutions to help clinicians monitor, track and discharge patients.

We’ve always known the power of data and interoperability to transform healthcare, however during these extraordinary times, accessing data to support and execute real-time evidence-based clinical decisions on small and large scales has never been more critical. Cerner has created various dashboards and data analytics to inform quick decision making and operational

management aspects.

What are some of the challenges faced during these difficult times and what was the strategy you followed?

One of the most difficult challenges was to change our mindsets and adopt to the situation with a different approach. The pandemic has been a defining moment for the healthcare industry. We had to find ways to optimize our technology to be able to collect and document data at a faster pace.

We now know that one of the main strategies to be resilient in similar situations is agility and fast adoption. Embracing new digital health technologies has accelerated and is becoming a priority of every healthcare player in the market.

What is the role of artificial intelligence (AI) in the war against COVID-19?

Can you imagine this pandemic in the 80s? It would have been a catastrophe.

The pandemic has made us realize the importance of AI is managing the health of communities with several healthcare and research organizations in the Middle East contributing to the development of AI models. AI offers several advantages over traditional analytics and clinical decision-making techniques. Machine learning algorithms can become more precise and accurate, allowing caregivers to gain unprecedented insights into diagnostics,



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care processes and personalized treatment. I believe AI has played an important role in managing the crisis. Identifying healthcare issues and developing relevant AI models to help support the delivery of better clinical and health outcomes, as well as improved patient and caregiver experiences, will be an important component of advancing a healthcare organization's digital transformation journey.

We are starting to see various innovative projects that use AI to answer important questions raised by the pandemic.

From machine learning models that can predict the probability of a COVID-19 patient requiring intensive care admission to models that stratify the population into priority groups for vaccination – even to models that try to predict the possible upcoming waves of the infection in certain cities or districts; the experiments are surfacing from many countries around the globe and in the region.

What have we learnt and what would be the impact of the pandemic on the future of healthcare?

Agility, in addition to the speed of healthcare delivery and decision making among others are key fundamentals of what we've learnt from this crisis; and we are still learning. We salute the visionary country leaders and all healthcare frontline staff for their efforts urging us to move with higher pace to find better ways provide better outcomes for patients.

A few years from now, we will look back and see a clear distinction between the pre- and post-COVID eras when it comes to modernization of the healthcare delivery. The pandemic has pushed us to come together and rethink healthcare delivery, which will create new opportunities to improve healthcare and accelerate the next era of transformation. I believe the pandemic has truly opened new doors for us. Now, healthcare is ripe for change.



OUR CORE BELIEF IS BUILDING A SEAMLESS AND CONNECTED WORLD WHERE EVERYONE THRIVES. CERNER STARTED IN THE KINGDOM OF SAUDI ARABIA WITH ONE CLIENT AND FOUR EMPLOYEES. TODAY WE ARE PROUD TO HAVE AROUND 300 EMPLOYEES AND A PRESENCE IN SEVEN COUNTRIES: UAE, SAUDI ARABIA, QATAR, EGYPT, KUWAIT, JORDAN AND OMAN.

