

Primary Health Care

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FILLING THE GAPS IN SAUDI ARABIA'S HEALTH SERVICES

This article outlines the strides taken by Saudi Arabia since 1980 towards providing primary health care for the entire population. Basic facilities have been introduced in accessible locations, more personnel have been trained and retrained, and considerable attention has been given to the education of the public in health matters.

Before 1951 there was no adequate tradition of health care in Saudi Arabia, and not even a Ministry of Health. During the next 30 years or so the major objective of the Ministry of Health was to establish hospitals, dispensaries and other curative facilities. Due to an acute shortage of qualified personnel there was a great dependence on expatriates to formulate plans and objectives. Much emphasis was put on founding sophisticated medical institutions for the provision of secondary and tertiary care. By 1980 there were enough institutions of this kind to cover most of the population.