Establishing the Emirati Field Hospital in Gaza: a model for rapid deployment in conflict zones

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DOI: XXX

Background: Armed conflicts place an extraordinary strain on fragile healthcare systems, requiring rapid, scalable, and coordinated medical responses. In late 2023, the United Arab Emirates launched Operation Chivalrous Knight three in response to the escalating humanitarian crisis in Gaza. A fully equipped field hospital was constructed and became operational within weeks, providing advanced emergency and trauma care in an active conflict environment.

Objective: To describe the planning, structure, and operational framework of the Emirati Field Hospital in Gaza and present a scalable model for rapid deployment of tertiary-level care in conflict zones.

Methods: The hospital was designed and executed using the 4S disaster management framework: Space, Stuff, Staff, and System. A modular tertiary-level facility was established within a stadium complex near the Egyptian border to ensure security, accessibility, and scalability. Functional zoning included emergency resuscitation, observation, outpatient services, operating theatres, intensive care units, diagnostic imaging, laboratory services, and rehabilitation facilities. Operational data and workflow adaptations were reviewed to evaluate system resilience under dynamic conflict conditions.

Results: The field hospital achieved full operational capability within a compressed timeline and functioned as a regional referral center for trauma and emergency care. Structured zoning enabled efficient patient flow and minimized cross-contamination risks, even during mass-casualty events. Logistics systems ensured continuity of care despite supply constraints, supported by strict inventory control and adaptive rationing. Multidisciplinary teams operated under a defined command structure, with emergency physicians frequently serving dual clinical and leadership roles. Telemedicine integration facilitated remote specialist consultations and supported clinical decision-making in complex cases. Continuous reassessment of triage and workflow allowed rapid adaptation to evolving operational demands.

Conclusion: The Emirati Field Hospital in Gaza demonstrates that with structured planning, disciplined execution, and adaptive leadership, tertiary-level emergency care can be delivered effectively within an active conflict zone. The 4S framework provides a practical, scalable model for future humanitarian and disaster medical responses worldwide.

Keywords: Conflict medicine, field hospital, disaster response.