

ICDL calls for injection of digital literacy initiatives in the healthcare sector

Health information technology and digitally literate staff are essential to a world-class healthcare system

March 6, 2007

ICDL GCC Foundation, the governing body of the International Computer Driving Licence (ICDL) digital literacy program for the Gulf States, is urging the healthcare industry in the region to embrace new initiatives that will provide staff with technology and essential related skills to better manage healthcare tasks. The Foundation maintains that a modern healthcare system supported by health information technology and computer skilled staff would increase efficiency, improve the quality of care, and help reduce medical errors.



“Although the healthcare industry was one of the early adopters of technology, other industries such as banking, retail and shipping have surpassed in transforming the way they do business through the adoption of information technology. Today, the healthcare industry still lags behind and its growing cost remains to be an increasing burden on government-financed healthcare system and employer-based health insurance, placing the local economies at a competitive disadvantage. Our call on the healthcare sector to adopt digital literacy for its employees is not only based on economic grounds but also for humanitarian reasons to save precious lives.” said Jamil Ezzo, Director General, ICDL GCC Foundation.

Many countries around the world have launched initiatives to enhance digital literacy in their health sector. The United Kingdom National Health Service (NHS), the third largest employer in the world after the Chinese Army and the Indian Railways, adopted ICDL as the reference standard for basic digital skills in 2001. NHS found it imperative that digital literacy of its staff was central to the success of its digitization efforts and for them to adapt quickly to new IT and information systems and get quicker, easier access to the information they need to support patient care. Over the past 6 years, around 600,000 out of the 1.3 million NHS employees have enrolled in the ICDL Program.

A recent survey by the British Computer Society (BCS) indicated that 96% of UK NHS employees who underwent the ICDL qualification have expressed satisfaction with the organization of the course and

the testing criteria. The results of the survey clearly demonstrate the successes of the ICDL qualification and the effect that it has on professional practice. 80% of the respondents rated the certification as very worthwhile.

Initiatives in the GCC are gaining momentum with health authorities and hospitals implementing or considering implementing the ICDL standard organization-wide. Ezzo commented, "Investments are spearheading the development of the national healthcare industry, resulting in the UAE currently being ranked as the fourth most developed Arab State according to the latest UN Human Development report. A nation's success is dependent on three main sectors: government, education and health; therefore implementing digital literacy initiatives is crucial to the success of all three sectors and to build a stronger nation."

"Studies have proven that digital literacy is the new economic driver and influences socio-economic development and a whole range of other benefits. The ICDL program enables people to certify their skills, improve their productivity and potential. Endorsing digital literacy should go a long way in aiding the modernization and technological upgrading program that the healthcare organizations are currently undertaking." Ezzo concluded.

The ICDL program is available region-wide with a syllabus consisting of 7 modules designed to cover the key concepts of computing, its practical applications and their use in the workplace and society, providing a solid base of computer skills to enable people to confidently use computers. An additional 8th module has been expounded by the ECDL Foundation to cater for best IT practices within the health sector administration environment, with part of this health module open to customization, according to the special environment and requirements of specific healthcare organizations.