

First-of-its-kind intervention clinic for children with autism in Kuwait

University of Miami alumna brings autism clinic home to Kuwait

KUWAIT CITY, Oct 15: Every morning, the two-year-old arrived at autism clinic crying – for a harrowing 90 minutes. But after two weeks, he walked in dry-eyed and hugged his student therapist. Fajer Almenaie knew then that she finally had landed in the right place, reports news.miami.edu.



Fajer Almenaie

“That was huge for me,” recalled Almenaie, who earned her Master’s in Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) from the University of Miami in December 2018. “It was the first time I thought I could make a difference.”

But Almenaie never imagined that, just two years after coming to the University at a crucial crossroads in her life, she would establish the Intensive Behavioral Intervention Services (IBIS) Clinic, the first-of-its-kind intervention clinic for children with autism in Kuwait. Today, Almenaie and the four technicians she trained are the only ABA-certified professionals in her Middle Eastern homeland offering what is scientifically regarded as the most effective therapy for curtailing disruptive behaviors and embedding basic functional skills in young children on the autism spectrum.

Following ABA principles – which employ observation, measurement, analysis, and endless repetition to

change specific behaviors – is intense, demanding, and tedious work. Few people are cut out for it. But when Anibal Gutierrez, the founder and director of the University’s five-year-old IBIS Clinic, interviewed Almenaie for one of the 10 spots in the highly selective master’s program, he knew she had found her destiny.

Almenaie was unfazed by Gutierrez’s warnings that she would practically live at the Department of Psychology clinic and would be responsible for one little human who would hit her, throw up on her, bite her, and, yes,

sometimes cry without end. She made it abundantly clear that she was ready to meet the challenge.

“The beauty of the clinic is that we train future ABA therapists, so we have a ready pool of students who, supervised by four doctoral-level faculty experts, are eager to give kids intense one-on-one attention,” said Gutierrez, who is also associate director of the UM-Nova Southeastern University Center for Autism and Related Disabilities.

“But some applicants really have no idea what we do,” he continued.

“They get that deer-in-the-headlights look. What they really want to do is behavioral forensics and work for the FBI. It was obvious from the onset that Fajer was knocking on the right door. She never flinched. She was particularly brave. She always volunteered for the toughest projects. I always had in mind that she would go back to Kuwait and offer something like this.”

Located in a small office suite in the Fawzia Sultan Healthcare Network’s Mental Health and Wellness Clinic in Kuwait City, Almenaie’s clinic is nearly identical to the IBIS Clinic, which during the COVID-19 pandemic continues to provide services and training online. The biggest difference: the intensive one-on-one therapy in Kuwait is offered in Arabic and English, instead of English and Spanish.

With the support of the network, she has practically cloned the IBIS Clinic nearly 12,000 miles away, with the cheerful wall decorations and toy-filled shelves to the multiple-skills stations and the policy that children can be enrolled without a formal autism diagnosis.

“I loved that IBIS provided therapy without a diagnosis, and I follow the same protocol here,” said Almenaie, who started the clinic from scratch last August, after passing the board-certified Behavior Analyst exam. “A lot of parents notice differences in their children, but they’re not ready for a diagnosis. They’re too overwhelmed and distraught. So, if we can ease the parents into this and provide the therapy that will improve behaviors before a diagnosis, we’re giving them a reason to look forward. As I always say, ‘I am not in the service of diagnosing. I am in the service of treating.’”

Almenaie was in her own dark place when Gutierrez interviewed her for the ABA master’s program in 2017. She knew from volunteering at the Fawzia Sultan clinic before heading to college that she wanted to work with children on the spectrum. But there was no direct route to that path in Kuwait, where the government pays the education costs for such professions as speech therapy. So, Almenaie pursued a bachelor’s degree in communication sciences and disorders from Temple University, with the goal of becoming a speech therapist. But an onslaught of rejections derailed her plan. Fifty master’s degree programs in speech therapy turned her down.

“I was desperate. At my 50th rejection I was at my breaking point,” Almenaie recalled. “I told my mom, ‘I can’t take this anymore.’ She reminded me I always was a planner and asked

for my Plan B. I said I wanted to be an ABA therapist. She had no idea what that was, but she told me to go for it.”

This time, Almenaie applied to only one master’s program, the only one in South Florida that operates an on-campus clinic that would provide her the clinical hours that, in addition to her coursework, she needed to qualify for the ABA exam. “Honestly I really didn’t know what I was in for,” she said. “I wasn’t going in blind, but all I knew was that I had the interest and motivation and was willing to do anything to succeed.”

After a brief but rough transition, she began to realize she was exactly where she belonged. It was a realization born from the small triumphs that accompany the big challenges – from the little boy who now knows how to communicate without crying to his mother who could not contain her joy the first time he called her “momma.”

“IBIS was the home of so many of my own mini successes,” Almenaie said. “It was really special to see kids who started with minimal communication graduate and go into normal preschool. I am so grateful I am able to bring those small triumphs, which I now know are actually glimmers of hope, to parents in Kuwait.”

‘Coordinated testing’

ACI, IATA seek support to underpin ‘recovery’

DUBAI, Oct 15: Airports Council International (ACI) World and the International Air Transport Association (IATA) reinforced the urgent call for governments to use testing as a means to safely re-open borders and re-establish global connectivity and to prevent the systemic collapse of the aviation industry with non-debt generating financial support.

The dual measures would protect countries from the importation of COVID-19 cases, avert an employment crisis in the travel and tourism sector, and ensure that the critical aviation structure remains viable and able to support the economic and social benefits on which the world relies.

The Air Transport Action Group (ATAG) estimates that 46 million jobs are at risk because of the loss of connectivity caused by the COVID-19 crisis. The vast majority of these (41.2 million jobs) are in the travel and tourism sector which relies on aviation. The remainder (4.8 million jobs) are spread across direct employment in aviation, including airports and airlines.

The viability of the airline sector to support employment is being challenged by the severe and prolonged fall in business:

- ACI estimates the airport industry will suffer a -60% reduction in revenues, reaching an unprecedented -\$104.5 billion.
- IATA estimates that airline revenues will be down at least 50% (\$419 billion compared to \$838 billion in 2019).

Safely re-opening borders without quarantine by using a coordinated approach to testing would boost the entire economy and be a revenue lifeline for airlines and airports. ACI and IATA have called on the ICAO Council Aviation Recovery Task Force to provide an internationally agreed and recognized approach to testing that can be adopted at a national level.

Governments are also urged to address the devastating impact of border closures and other government-imposed travel restrictions by supporting aviation’s viability through direct financial assistance in forms of financial support that:

- protects jobs and operations
- does not increase debt levels, and
- minimizes default on debt and credit losses.

“The COVID-19 pandemic remains an existential crisis and airports, airlines and their commercial partners need direct and swift financial assistance to protect essential operations and jobs,” ACI World Director General Luis Felipe de Oliveira said. “But such assistance is only one piece of the puzzle as the industry restarts and prepares to sustain continuing operations focused on the health and welfare of travelers, staff, and the public.

ACI and IATA are aligned in calling for urgent government action to introduce widespread and coordinated testing of passengers to enable quarantine requirements to be removed. Without this action, it is not an exaggeration

that the industry is facing collapse.”

Alexandre de Juniac, IATA’s Director General and CEO, said: “We need action quickly. Large parts of the global air network have been severely ruptured for well over a half year. Job losses—inside and outside the industry—mount with each day that borders are closed. And with each job lost the recovery and impact on the broader economy becomes even more difficult. Momentum is building in support of testing to re-open borders. It’s the top operational priority. And to make sure that we have a viable aviation sector at the end of this crisis a second round of financial relief is unavoidable.”

In accordance with World Health Organization’s (WHO) International Health Regulations, ACI and IATA are united in the belief that costs related to public health measures aimed at mitigating the spread of communicable diseases, including the introduction of a coordinated approach to testing, should be borne by national governments.

During a meeting in Luxembourg, envoys for the 27 member states agreed on a common approach to travel restrictions and testing to help citizens and workers get more clarity on how they can transit across the continent.

In March, several EU nations hastily closed their borders in an attempt to stop the spread of the virus, even though the EU’s Schengen agreement allows residents to move freely between countries without visas. The action blocked traffic and medical equipment.

“The COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted our daily lives in many ways. Travel restrictions have made it difficult for some of our citizens to get to work, to university or to visit their loved ones,” said Michael Roth, the German minister for Europe. “It is our common duty to ensure coordination on any measures which affect free movement and to give our citizens all the information they need when deciding on their travel.”

Provide

Member states agreed to provide coronavirus data to the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC), which will publish a weekly map sorting regions according to the severity of coronavirus outbreaks.

The criteria used to define the colored zones – green, orange and red – are the number of newly notified cases per 100,000 in the past 14 days as well as the testing rate and the test positivity rate in the past week.

Member states agreed that they should not restrict free movement of people traveling from or to green areas, but national EU governments will continue to set their own restrictions such as quarantines or mandatory testing upon arrival for people coming from orange or red zones.

A region will be classified as green if the 14-day notification rate is lower than 25 and the test positivity rate below 4%. Under the criteria adopted Tuesday, most EU regions would be either red or orange.

GCC social affairs meet tackles efforts in combating COVID-19

Kuwait Voluntary Work Center in line with proposal

KUWAIT CITY, Oct 15, (Agencies): The sixth meeting of the Ministers of Social Affairs of the countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), chaired by the UAE on Wednesday, discussed each country’s efforts in combating COVID-19.

Kuwait’s Minister of Social Affairs and Minister of State for Economic Affairs Mariam Al-Aqeel said in a press statement, after her participation in the meeting through video conferencing, that the Secretariat General of GCC was keen to issue documents with all efforts to be used in Arab and international forums to document them in the countries of the region.

Among the proposals submitted by Kuwait two years ago, was a guideline system that represents a mechanism for dealing with disabled people in the GCC countries, which contains four chapters and 22 articles that is enforceable, she said, noting that the GCC countries have submitted an extension for two years as they work on their national laws for the affairs of people with disabilities.

The work in the guidelines for volunteer work that focused on the pandemic was used for its role in supporting the work of governments, and it was approved to extend work in this scope, she mentioned, indicating that the Kuwait Voluntary Work Center was fully in line with this proposal. The proposal submitted by Saudi Arabia was approved, which stipulates that there should be a day for the Gulf family, has been referred to the committee of experts to examine the appropriate dates for the GCC countries, Al-Aqeel explained.

She stated the meeting thanked the State of Kuwait and appreciated the country’s efforts for hosting the Theatrical Festival for People with Disabilities last year, noting that Saudi Arabia next hosts the same festival.

She stated that the budget of the Social Affairs Office of the Gulf Cooperation Council has been approved, which will be later submitted to the leaders of the respective GCC countries.



Press conference in progress.

World Future Energy Summit from April 5-7, 2021

Expo to demonstrate world’s most advanced urban tech

ABU DHABI, Oct 15: World Future Energy Summit 2021, to be hosted next April, will feature the highly anticipated Smart Cities Expo & Forum. Bringing the cities of the future to life will be a fascinating exhibition that demonstrates many of the world’s newest and most ground-breaking technological innovations, with recent summits having attracted nearly 35,000 visitors from around the world. The expert-led forum, in addition, will reveal the enormous commercial and economic opportunities that lie ahead for urban planning. The most recent Smart Cities Forum featured 73 speakers, 27 sessions and was attended by more than 1,200 people.

The Smart Cities Expo & Forum will bring together proactive governments and municipalities, along with pioneers in planning, mobility, digitalisation, smart health, and safe city technology. It will also showcase the potential of connected communities through fostering dialogue and the exchange of ideas between the brightest and most disruptive minds in the business.

Abu Dhabi has been pioneering smart city concepts for more than a decade, proving the effectiveness of sustainable urban planning and such developments are now the foremost focus of planners hoping to achieve sustainable, safe and happy city life. One of the key speakers at the Smart Cities Forum is Stephane le Gentil,

COO and Acting CEO of Abu Dhabi Energy Services Company (ADES), who noted that the term ‘smart cities’ doesn’t necessarily relate to future projects. “In line with Abu Dhabi’s Demand Side Management and Energy Rationalization Strategy 2030, ADES is focused on increasing the energy efficiency of Abu Dhabi’s existing building stock through existing solutions. We can make use of today’s technology and retrofit systems to improve water and electricity consumption by making older buildings more efficient.

Utilise

“In the process, we are able to utilise the skills and services of private sector contractors and suppliers who are already based here in the UAE. The knock-on effects of this are a more settled population and enormous contributions to the local economy while improving our neighbourhoods and commercial premises. It’s definitely a win-win situation, not just for Abu Dhabi, but for all of us fortunate to live and work in the UAE.”

The Smart Cities Forum will also host key note speakers from Amana Investments, Taka Solutions, Ark Energy, EV Lab and AD Little, among others, and they will focus on such subjects as government plans and initiatives for regional smart cities, 5G, connectivity and leveraging Artificial Intelligence (AI) in urban

development. Also, under the spotlight will be cyber safety, the Internet of Things (IoT), people and data in the urban environment. Considered too will be the future of smart health, energy and water efficient architecture, 3D printing and smart mobility.

Regional authorities are already working at solving the multiple challenges faced by urban planners, harnessing the power of artificial intelligence, machine learning and the Internet of Things to transform the ways in which people live together, when it comes to mobility, communication, healthcare and neighbourhood development. More needs to be done, however, and the opportunities for global economic recovery are closely entwined with the large-scale adoption of sustainable technology.

The Oxford Business Group wrote about the future of Smart Cities in a report published on 16 June 2020, quoting a 2018 forecast from Grand View Research, which stated that the global market size of smart cities was set to rise to \$2.57tn by 2025, up from \$737bn in 2018. It added that the International Data Corporation’s Worldwide Semi-annual Smart Cities Spending Guide projected global expenditures of \$124bn in 2020, up 18.9% on 2019. And according to a recent KPMG report, ‘The Rise of Smart Cities’, the MENA smart cities market will double in value from \$1.3 billion in 2018 to \$2.7 billion by 2022.

UAE Space Agency signs Artemis Accords to advance int’l space cooperation

ABU DHABI, Oct 15: The UAE Space Agency (UAESA) on Tuesday was amongst the first signatories of NASA’s Artemis Accords at the 71st International Astronautical Congress (IAC), running between October 12 and 14, 2020.

In May 2020, NASA, the American Space Agency, formally announced the Artemis Accords, based on a shared vision for principles, grounded in the United Nations’ Outer Space Treaty of 1967, to create a safe and transparent environment that facilitates exploration, science and commercial activities for the benefit of all humanity.

In a virtual event hosted by NASA, Her Excellency Sarah Al Amiri, Minister of State for Advanced Technology and Chair of the UAE Space Agency and Jim Bridenstine, NASA Administrator along with the heads of the Space Agencies of Australia, Canada, Italy, Japan, Luxembourg and the United Kingdom.

The UAE is committed to the advancement of space exploration while ensuring the sustainability of space. The Accords aligns with the UAE’s long-term programs to explore outer space and collaborate internationally on better understanding our solar system.

Though a young nation with a relatively young space program, the UAE has made significant strides in space science and exploration having launched several satellites, as well as the UAE Astronaut Programme, which made history last year with the first Emirati astronaut visiting the International Space Station (ISS). But the nation’s most notable of achievements thus far is the successful launch of the Hope



HE Sarah Al Amiri, Minister of State for Advanced Technology and Chair of the UAE Space Agency.

Probe Emirates Mars Mission (EMM), that will provide us with a comprehensive understanding of the weather system of Mars along with better understanding of underlying factors that could cause climate change. With this mission the UAE will release the data to the global science community without an embargo period. This aligns with the accords that emphasizes the importance of data sharing across missions along with the interoperability of systems to drive space exploration.

Speaking on this partnership, Her Excellency Sarah Al

Amiri said: “We welcome this initiative NASA has taken to strengthen the broad principles of peaceful human exploration and co-existence in space. As a peaceful space-fairing nation, the UAE is pleased to become a signatory of the Artemis Accords, and our endorsement of this agreement is in keeping with our principle of the peaceful use and exploration of outer space to enhance development and sustainability goals here on Earth. It highlights the UAE’s efforts to collaborate with the global community to establish new and improved principles and frameworks that strengthen international laws for space exploration, as we firmly believe that the advancement and diversification of the space sector requires the concerted efforts of all global players.”

Her Excellency added: “The UAE has always been a proponent of international collaboration, and we have benefited from many partnerships as we have evolved our own space program. We also make effective contributions to international efforts, to push the boundaries in our shared human knowledge and understanding of our universe. We are one human race and we are in this together.”

In line with the principles outlined in the Artemis Accords, signatories agree to conduct all activities for peaceful purposes, and to publicly and transparently describe their policies and plans. In complying with open standard requirement, signatory nations strive for interoperability, ensure the provision of emergency assistance, register space objects to help avoid harmful interference, release scientific data publicly, and endeavor to protect sites and artifacts of historic value.

X-CITE by Alghanim Electronics

Service Center

ANNOUNCEMENT

All Alghanim Electronics customers who have left their electronic appliances for the purpose of repair service on or before 31/08/2020 are kindly requested to collect them within two weeks from this notice date.

Last date to collect your products is 31/10/2020.

If these products are not collected before the above date, Alghanim Electronics reserves the right to dispose of these products.