

UAE'S BEST SPECIAL NEEDS CENTRES

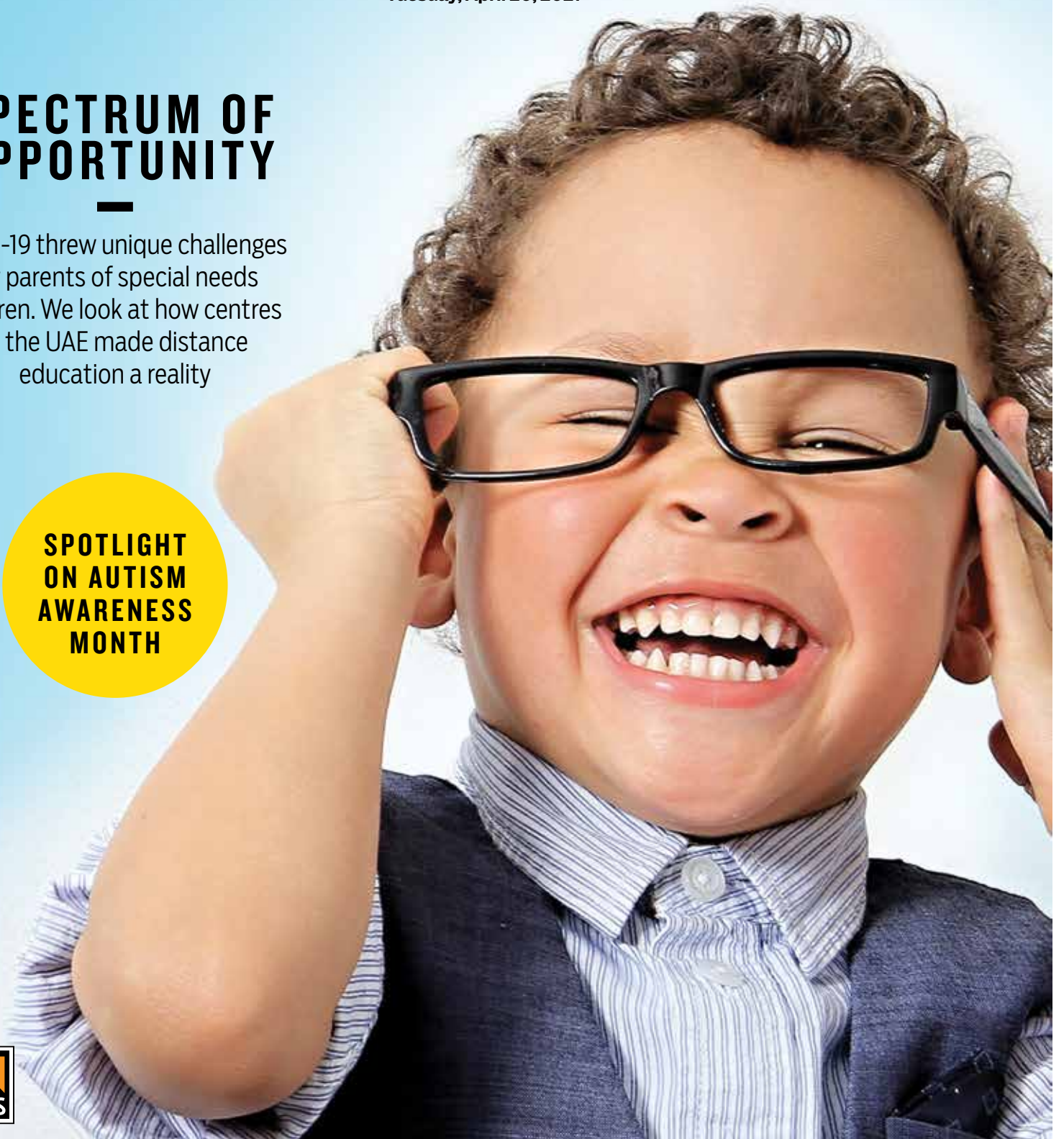
CREATING A SUPPORTIVE ENVIRONMENT FOR SPECIAL PEOPLE

Tuesday, April 20, 2021

SPECTRUM OF OPPORTUNITY

Covid-19 threw unique challenges for parents of special needs children. We look at how centres in the UAE made distance education a reality

**SPOTLIGHT
ON AUTISM
AWARENESS
MONTH**



PARTNER CONTENT

PARTNER CONTENT

● Dr Ben Hadj Hassine, Chief Executive Officer and Marina Loukas, Administrative Director at DDY are proud recipients of the Excellence Awards, offered by Dubai Healthcare City Authority



THE DORIS DUAN-YOUNG AUTISM CENTER

Comprehensive and curated intervention

● **Inas Ktaech**, Clinical Director, The Doris Duan-Young Autism Center (DDY), sheds light on how the organisation supports autistic and differently abled children

How curated are the services that DDY offers in the field of Applied Behavioural Analysis as a form of therapy?

Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) is the most effective therapies used to assist individuals diagnosed with Autism to decrease behaviors and acquire new skills that help them flourish in their natural environment. DDY recognises that everyone is different and not one child with Autism is the same as another, therefore the importance to curate our services to meet the individual needs of every child we serve is our main goal. Children at DDY are classified in four categories based on age, skill set and their current school placement. The 4 categories are: Early Intervention, School Readiness, School Support and Vocational Skills.

Are any goals set according to a patient's age in ABA therapy?

Each child from as young as two years old who has been diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) or other developmental disorder has their own ABA treatment goals set according to the skills that they

need to decrease and increase, but ABA therapy typically has common general domains including:

- Developing communication and language skills
- Decreasing challenging and disruptive behaviors
- Increasing social skills
- Increasing independent and daily living skills
- Helping improve and enhance their performance in their academic settings

Our goal is to take each child to their maximum potential by calculating a plan that best suits them (i.e., various ABA goals, Occupational Therapy, Physical Therapy and Speech Language Therapy if needed) in order to help decrease the trajectory gap between them and their peer group.

Once our Clinical team meets a child, we curate a specialised ABA therapy schedule that will get them in achieving their goals. The goal is to encourage behaviors that can help the child thrive and become more independent. DDY believes that a successful ABA treatment center believes in comprehensive and cu-

NEED TO KNOW

SERVICES ON OFFER:

- Applied Behaviour Analysis Therapy (ABA)
- Occupational Therapy (OT)
- Speech and Language Therapy (SLT)
- Physical Therapy (PT)
- Supervision by BCBA and BCaBA
- Psychological Assessments
- Standardised Assessments
- School Readiness Programme
- Learning Support
- Social Skills Training
- Parent and Caregiver Training
- Community Outings
- Vocational Training

CONTACT

Call: 04 431 2890 or 052 613 9928

Email: admin@ddydubai.com

Address: Dubai Healthcare City, Al Razi Building 64, Block C Units 6003 and 6006-6008, and Block B Unit 01R5, Dubai UAE

Website: www.ddyautismcenter.com

rated intervention that addresses each child's unique needs.

What are the Center's vision and mission?

DDY's vision is to become a trusted leader in innovative care for individuals with autism, and build an inclusive society in the UAE and beyond. Its mission is to provide evidence-based comprehensive and personalised care for individuals on the autism spectrum and all families of People with Determination.

The Doris Duan-Young Autism Center has pioneered in offering counselling and behavioural support services for children and adults. We function under the leadership of a world-class professional team that consists of the following:

Board Certified Behavior Analysts (BCBA), Clinical Psychologist, Behavior Analyst Technicians, Speech and Language Pathologists, Occupational Therapists and Physical Therapists; licensed by the Dubai Healthcare City Authority.

We deeply understand the needs and requirements of our families who have children with Autism Spectrum Disorders and other Developmental Disorders. Our passionate team of professionals, work collaboratively to provide services that are programmed to build on skills that are key for leading a functional life within the child's family and community.

Our facility provides a variety of interventions, utilizing ongoing relationships with other agencies in the community through the use of a multidisciplinary team approach that meet the client's specific needs.

“Our goal is to take each child to their maximum potential by calculating a plan that best suits them.”

THE TECHNOLOGY ADVANTAGE

DDY is one of the most credible global brands that supports the needs of the autistic and the differently abled.

Marina Loukas (in picture), Administrative Director, The Doris Duan-Young Autism Center, says, “There are a lot of significant areas that DDY stands out from its competitors, and one



is its state-of-the-art facilities. The facilities at DDY are spread over 10,000 square feet at Al Razi Medical Complex, Dubai Healthcare City giving parents, caretakers, and people of determination the benefit and convenience of access to interdisciplinary care in proximity. Apart from the DDY's overwhelming area size, the center is proud to have the following:

- **Sensory Development Center (Sensory Corner and Sensory Pods):** Features fiber-optic illuminations, LED ball pit, bubble columns, vibrating bean bag chair, soothing aura lights, and sensory toys, among others.
- **Imagination Center:** Adopts 'play' into teaching independent living in the home, supermarket, and other simulation setups.
- **Media and Group Play Center:** Fosters social skills through activities like games, movies, dancing, karaoke, or rock climbing.
- **Observation Room:** Parents and caretakers can observe a session in progress using a one-way mirror, minimizing distraction and the child's reactivity. In addition, the live recording feature helps parents replay sections.
- **3D Immersive Technology (Magic Carpet):** An interactive environment that can be customised for education, calming sensory application, rehabilitation, mainstream learning, social skills, group responding, speed and dexterity, visual performance, and concentration.

All of these state-of-the-art facilities can be showcased to communicate innovation and DDY'S commitment to comprehensive care which has been further demonstrated through the Excellence Awards received from Dubai Healthcare City Authority for two consecutive years, 2019 and 2020.



● A Sensory Pod at The Doris Duan-Young Autism Center

Reach out to reach within

- Parental training was essential in ensuring the needs of autistic children were met during the pandemic, say heads of special needs centres in the UAE

BY SANKAR SRI PILLAI
Head of Content,
Supplements & Contract
Publishing

Special needs education emphasises the presence and implementation of a structured routine and proximity to mentor figures to ensure its success. However, the pandemic lockdown created obstacles that almost threw this process off track. Special needs institutions have since been exploring means to circumvent the gap and reach out to children and parents.

As one of the most established brands in providing support to autistic children, The Doris Duan-Young Autism Center has been reaching out to parents in this hour of need, says the brand's Clinical Director, Inas Ktaech.

"Apart from the Behaviour Teleconsultation and home sessions we launched during April last year and the resulting lockdown, we also prepared and sent out social stories to our children during these challenging times," says Ktaech. "Social stories are one of the great tools to effectively help children of determination understand the world around them. In these specific social stories, we helped them understand the pandemic we are currently going through in the easiest way possible.

"On top of this, we facilitated online parent workshops to educate parents on various topics on autism. These workshops were led in both English and Arabic with a BCBA/BCaBA via online platform. Parents were given information on various topics and strategies on how to promote it in their home setting. A library of parent training videos were also given that role played various Applied Behavioural Analysis (ABA)



Shutterstock

programme we create a tailor-made plan for the child in which we teach the parents/family members to work with their child on behaviour, communication and daily life skills. This is done through a mix of theoretical training and live coaching through video calls with the parent.

"We thought of this as throughout the lockdown we received a vast number of parents who did not know how to manage their child's behaviours although that the child was receiving therapy outside. Thus through this programme we empower parents, while ensuring that the child is learning at home."

That said, certain schools are still of the notion that remote learning does not work for the sector.

Anju Varghese, Director, Milestones Autism Rehabilitation Center, Dubai, says, "Remote learning has not been very practical with most of our students. Our main focus during this time has been in supporting our overwhelmed parents who ended up wearing multiple hats. We provide on-line training and remote sessions for parents to give them the tools to teach their special ones." ■

programmes or strategies on camera to effectively respond to their child's challenging behaviours at home."

Neuropedia, a neuroscience centre for children, also realises how critical it is to extend its services and support systems to parents of autistic children during the pandemic, and the advantages programmes such as ABA therapy bring to the table.

Surge in awareness

Dr Reet Mann-Sohal, Chief Operating Officer, Neuropedia, says, "Autistic spectrum disorder is a neurodevelopmental condition that is becoming more and more prevalent these days. Recent estimates suggest that up to 1 in 68-100 children could have a diagnosis of ASD, and there is a surge in awareness among parents and families about this condition. Neuropedia plays a huge role in diagnosing, managing and raising awareness about ASD in the community. Neuropedia has a large ABA department comprising BCBA, under whose supervision the Behavioural Therapists carry out evidence-based management plan for children with ASD. The

multidisciplinary team is also supported by Occupational Therapists and Speech Therapists as lots of children with ASD have sensory processing difficulties along with speech disorders."

Neuropedia also reaches out within the community and schools to raise awareness by carrying out teaching and training programme for school teachers and SEN Coordinators. Neuropedia runs a special inclusive programme, "The Unity Class" in schools to ensure that children with ASD are not at disadvantage when it comes to learning and integrating into the mainstream environment.

At the Swedish Specialised Centre for Special Needs, it's all about curating a programme to meet the needs of not just the student but the family too, says Alia El Naggar, the brand's Founder and Clinical Director.

Made for the family

"We have created a specific programme that we call "family take the lead", which is provided online. "We start the whole process online from assessment to intervention review," says El Naggar. "Throughout this



Inas Ktaech
The Doris Duan-Young
Center Autism Center



Anju Varghese
Milestones Autism
Rehabilitation Center



Dr Reet Mann-Sohal
Neuropedia



Alia El Naggar
Swedish Specialised
Centre for Special Needs

PIONEERS IN BRINGING ADVANCED AND INNOVATIVE SOLUTIONS FOR CHILDREN

- Doctors talk about neurological disorders in children, pandemic-related challenges, the services offered, and initiatives undertaken by the centre to raise awareness



• In conversation with
Dr Arif Khan, Founder,
CEO and Consultant
Paediatric Neurologist,
Neuropedia

The clinical services are not hindered. The entire patient flow pathway had to be reorganised and adapted to suit the need of the hour. To minimise, in-person attendances and maintain social distancing we had to innovate and adapt to a new form of consultation called telemedicine. This helped us cater to our regular chronic patients by providing them virtual advice and sending prescriptions by emails. Our staff have to be credited entirely for maintaining the highest level of care and quality while limiting infectious risks for our paediatric patients and their families.

What are some of the initiatives that Neuropedia undertook in the past one year to raise awareness on neurological disorders among children?

Rare diseases under the umbrella of neurology and genetics are considered orphan diseases because they are extremely rare and therefore not seen regularly by paediatricians. This leads to poor recognition and knowledge stagnation in this area. Neuropedia took a unique initiative to bringing in clinical genetic services to add to their comprehensive neuroscience team. A number of webinars and short interviews were carried out to spread the message among professionals and general population. We also developed speciality clinics for Down syndrome and spasticity management. The purple day for epilepsy was celebrated with a lot of exposure and content, thereby raising awareness of epilepsy in childhood. Narrative medicine, is telling stories about a patient's journey with a specific diagnosis, to bring about awareness among the regional population. We carried out a number of such activities using the reach of social media and print media throughout the year.

As the CEO of a pioneering brand in treating neurological disorders in children, how mature are the services that the UAE has on tap and where do you see Neuropedia in this space?

The UAE has made immense strides in the world with its fast-paced development. In a mere 50 years since it's formation, the UAE has seen the kind of meteoric rise that few countries thriving heavily on expatriate relocation manage to sustain. Paediatric neurology as a speciality is a relatively new branch of medicine. There are only a handful of trained paediatric neurologists in the country and to add to this we noted a significant gap in interdisciplinary services in paediatric neuroscience. Neuropedia Children's Neuroscience Center was born to wedge a similar gap in the field of paediatric neuroscience. Over the past three years of service, Neuropedia has brought in the most advanced and evidence-based therapies and treatment options for the regional child population. We have always strived to be the pioneers in bringing the most advanced and innovative solutions for children.

The pandemic saw a lot of hospitals being pushed to the limit in terms of providing treatment and care. What were the pandemic-related challenges that Neuropedia and its staff faced and how were they surmounted?

During this unprecedented Covid period, we faced a considerable number of challenges. First and foremost was the need to avoid and contain infections as well as to protect both the children and parents and the staff involved while making sure



• In conversation with
Dr Aman Sohal, Founding
Partner and Clinical
Director, Neuropedia

has recently pioneered a hub-and-spoke model wherein after the children are appropriately diagnosed, the treatment plan is undertaken within the schools in the community to avoid unnecessary travel to the clinic. This model also fulfils our vision and responsibility of educating the wider community by carrying out seminars/webinars and raising awareness about complex neurological conditions amongst teachers and parents.

Neurodevelopmental paediatrics is still in its evolutionary stages globally. How expansive are the services that Neuropedia provides in this space?

Neurodevelopmental paediatrics, a sub-branch of paediatrics and paediatric neurology is an integral part of our clinical practice and has more recently come into focus globally due to increased awareness among general population and clinicians. The purpose of this sub-branch is to unpick any underlying neurodevelopmental issues, which children may have, as early as possible so that appropriate interventions can be put in place to support the child to achieve his/her maximum potential over time. Neuropedia is quite unique because we have trained professionals to identify children who may have these neurodevelopmental disorders at a very young age and provide them targeted treatment so that they do not veer away too far from the "trajectory of normal development". These disorders include development delay, abnormal behaviour patterns, autistic spectrum disorder, and speech delay. The children are usually seen by our paediatric neurologists and referred to a child psychologists and/or behavioural consultants to formulate an early intervention plan, which in turn is carried out by expert therapists.

As a pioneering paediatric neurosciences centre in the UAE, how comprehensive are the services that Neuropedia offers?

Neuropedia Children's Neuroscience Center is a flagship institute catering specifically to children with neurological disorders with extensive breadth of services in and around the region. Neuropedia is one-stop-shop for all major services pertaining to neurological disorders, including paediatric neurology consultations and diagnostics, neurophysiology services such as EEG's and nerve conduction study, paediatric orthopaedics, neurogenetics, child psychology, physiotherapy, occupational therapy, speech and language therapy, behavioural therapy, and paediatric dietetics services. All these are provided under the expert guidance of consultant paediatric neurologists and carried out by professionals trained at premier institutes around the world. Neuropedia

For more information,
visit Neuropedia.ae or call **04 343 1113** to book an appointment



What is the USP of the brand?

Paediatric neurology is a reasonably new sub-specialty in the field of medicine and has been making big strides over the past few years in the field of research and service provision to children with neurological disorders. At Neuropedia we always keep the child and family's interest foremost and advocate a family-centered approach in managing some extremely complex disorders. Neuropedia prides itself for being in the forefront in providing outcome-based neurological services and our specialist staff is highly committed to achieve the best possible outcomes for the children, all under "one roof".

PROVIDING THE BEST LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

Founders of leading institutions in the UAE discuss how they set up the centres, the challenges faced and innovative services being offered to children with special needs

“Covid-19 challenged us to be creative and innovative”



Marina Loukas
Administrative Director,
The Doris Duan Young
Autism Center

The pandemic created a need for resources to manage challenging behaviours in children due to disruptions to routine on account of school closings, need for distance learning strategies, and lack of access to professional in-school support for families. How did you handle the situation?

As a centre that provides face-to-face services, Covid-19 challenged us to be creative and innovative. In order to continue with supporting our families and providing our expertise, The Doris Duan-Young Autism Center (DDY) launched Behaviour Teleconsultation for families during the early months of the pandemic last April 2020. We conducted a BCBA/BCaBA consultation and trained families via Zoom on how to continue with the ABA programs and behaviour management procedures. We did this by providing parents with parent training videos on how to teach certain skills and worksheets/resources to practice those skills. On top of this, we also implemented home sessions for children with challenging behaviours during lockdown.

How did you help transition children to return to their educational settings?

Our School Readiness Program consists of children five years and above who are not enrolled in a mainstream classroom. These individuals receive support to learn skills required to participate in a school setting. It includes behaviour reduction and pre-academics/academics skill training (eye contact, increasing on-task behaviours, following instructions, tracing, writing, and reading); communication skills training, social skills and independent play skills training, increase their independence skills, life skills (toileting, dressing, and feeding). Once the child successfully gets enrolled into a school, we provide support so the student can participate in their mainstream learning environment.

PARENT SPEAKS



“We were fortunate to have found DDY, one of the best autism centres in the UAE with quality services and long and proven experience. This centre is a safe haven for children of determination and their conditions have improved and developed at the hands of skilled therapists.

“In all of the times I've visited the centre, I've observed the great leadership of its owner, Dr Ben Hadj Hassine and how hardworking the therapists are. My child improved in a fast and noticeable manner. I'm also beyond grateful to all the programmes in DDY because they are not only limited to our children, but also provide continuous training and full support for parents, even through endless enquiries. They also educate us to deal with our child at home and in the community. My son showed tremendous progress at the centre and I've experienced some proud moments such as when he developed speech and pronunciation, when he got accepted and enrolled in school and also when he advanced to a new grade. These moments gave us a positive reality and patience to continue to stand by my child and endure all the difficulties.”

— Mohammad Sultan

“Our therapy approach focuses on involving families”



Alia El Naggar
Founder and Clinical
Director, Swedish
Specialised Centre
for Special Needs

Every child is unique and has different styles of learning. How has the Swedish Specialised Centre for Special Needs managed to curate its services to meet individual needs?

We create individualised programmes for children by looking at their strengths and weaknesses. In the beginning of the journey we assist the child in a holistic manner by assessing everything from behaviour, and communication to motor skills. This gives us an indication of the child's individual needs and based on this we chart out a comprehensive programme that covers all the child's needs, while also creating a training initiative called Family Take the Lead Programme to educate the family on how to ensure a proper environment at home.

The centre has an established set-up in Cairo, Egypt. Why did you decide to expand into the UAE?

We have many clients from the UAE in Egypt, as well as other countries in the Middle East, Denmark, Canada and China. We came

specifically to the UAE because the feedback from our clients from the UAE at our centre in Egypt made us realise that the kind of therapy approach we adopt, which focuses on the family's involvement, is very different from what others offer. Also, before deciding to expand to the UAE, we did our market research and realised that there is no real approach here that focuses on involving families. This is why we decided to proceed with the launch of our centre in the UAE.

PARENT SPEAKS



“I'm a mother of four children, including a 13-year-old boy on the autism spectrum. I first met Alia in 2018 at a workshop she conducted and I found her approach phenomenal. When she set up her consultancy program in the UAE, I requested for her services. We had barely started the program when the pandemic hit, but she set up a personalised online platform and assisted me every step of the way to make sure that I was gaining instructional control with my son. She took me on trainings, which equipped me with a number of tools. Dr Alia has a very parent-centred approach and was always responsive when I reached out to her even outside session timings.”

— Asma Ahmad

“Our mission is to raise more awareness towards early detection”



Anju Varghese
Director, Milestones
Autism Rehabilitation
Center, Dubai

What prompted you to look at the prevalence of autism in Dubai?

As a clinician who has served families of determination in Dubai over the past 10+ years, my mission is to support the government's outstanding initiative to empower the determined community.

We have seen great improvement in early diagnosis and intervention over the past years. However, there is still lack of awareness among parents, denial, social stigma and cultural barriers that are affecting the timely diagnosis and intervention of autism. Milestones Center is established with the mission to raise more awareness towards early identification and intervention, promote acceptance and inclusion, and to provide high-quality and affordable care to the families we serve.

Please elaborate on Milestones Autism Rehabilitation Center's services.

Milestones Center has recently opened its doors with a mission to raise awareness, promote acceptance and inclusion for people of determination, envisioning an integrated community with access to best services and education. We offer comprehensive, high-quality, evidence-based therapy and education services to maximise children's potential and walk them towards independence.

What do you see on the horizon in terms of research and social movements on autism?

Research has contributed to a better understanding of autism and the effectiveness of early identification and evidence-based interventions. As the prevalence continues to increase, the efforts to apply the existing research findings needs improvement. I look forward to future research, especially in the fields of genetics and neurobiology. More emphasis should be given to self-advocacy, and employment of individuals with autism.



SSC For Special Needs

Think Inclusivity, Think Success

Now introducing our new program “Family Take the Lead”



Meet the founder
Alia El Naggar
CDA Licensed Psychologist &
Early Childhood Specialist

We enable you to enable your child through a tailor-made family training program



We work with:



Autism & Related
Conditions



Behavioural
Difficulties



Play, Social & Executive
Function Deficits



Difficulties with
Fine & Gross Motor
Activity



Attention/
Concentration
Difficulties



Speech & Language
Deficits

Contact us

sscforspecialneeds.com

www.facebook.com/ssc4specialneeds

info@sscforspecialneeds.com

+971522478115

+971522478115



“We create a welcoming and comprehensive environment”



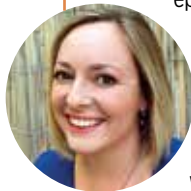
Dr Arif Khan
Founder, CEO and
Consultant Paediatric
Neurologist,
Neuropedia

What led to the birth of Neuropedia considering it's a unique and one-of-its-kind concept in the healthcare industry?

While there are larger healthcare providers in the region that offer paediatric neurology only few can create a welcoming and comprehensive environment that facilitates diagnosis from an interdisciplinary point of view. The multifaceted nature of neurosciences and its application in paediatrics is often overlooked by a hospital or clinic that focuses on multiple specialties. Neuropedia functions on the concept of creating a self-sufficing cycle of consultation, diagnosis, prognosis, treatment and rehabilitation, curated especially for each child.

PARENT SPEAKS

Dr Arif has supported us as a family since my son Charlie was first diagnosed with a rare epileptic condition in 2015. When we were in the back of an ambulance, Dr Arif was on the phone supporting me through the panic. When we have received negative or confusing results Dr Arif has been there to talk us through them and make sure we understand. He puts my son at ease and has made our journey through epilepsy far easier than it could have been and we will always be grateful to him for this.
— **Carola Willox**



“We believe that children and families will trust our skills”



Dr Aman Sohal
Founding Partner
and Clinical Director,
Neuropedia

What is your role as Clinical Director of Neuropedia?

At Neuropedia we pride ourselves in providing evidence-based management to children with various neurological conditions. My role involves ensuring that the treatment plans offered to the children are quality assured with highest standards. We have a robust clinical governance framework, which includes regular clinical appraisals of the staff members, multi-disciplinary team meetings, risk management, critical incident reporting pathway as well as patient experience. In simple terms, we believe in doing the right thing, at the right time, by the right person. We at Neuropedia always strive to achieve the best and in that context both positive and negative feedback are important aspects of learning and quality improvement. We have a formal patient feedback pathway, which helps us to learn and improve our service provision on a day-to-day basis. Our patients and their families have given us positive feedback, which is evident in various testimonials they have provided on our social media platforms.

PARENT SPEAKS

No mother wants to learn that their child has any medical condition, much less a genetic one. Somehow, I feel responsible for the DNA assembly that took place. That said, I believe that every decision we make regarding our child's care must start with information for us to weigh our moves carefully. We use Neuropedia as our resource centre — from Dr Aman to the therapists — for advice on things like schooling, behaviour, and sleep conditions. And that is how I'm learning to raise a child who has cri-du-chat syndrome.
— **Laura Laugier**



PICK THE RIGHT CENTRE

● **GN Focus** picks some of the top centres that can help your child through the challenges

The Doris Duan Young Autism Center



Key services
Applied behaviour analysis therapy, occupational therapy, speech and language therapy, physical therapy, supervision by BCBA and

BCaBA, psychological assessments, standardised assessments, School Readiness Program, learning support, and many other services.

Strengths Passionate professionals licensed by Dubai Healthcare City Authority and certified by the Behaviour Analyst Certification Board®; wide range and up-to-date therapeutic programs; recognised through different awards consecutively by accreditation bodies since 2014; first autism centre to certify all clinical staff in SMG (safe management training) in the UAE; and Excellence Awards by Dubai Healthcare City Authority for two consecutive years 2019 and 2020.

Ddyautismcenter.com

Neuropedia



Key services
Paediatric neurology, paediatric orthopaedics, paediatric neurophysiology, general and neurodevelopmental

paediatrics, clinical genetics, paediatric speech and language therapy, paediatric occupational therapy, dietetics, BrainRx, and many other services.

Strengths Comprehensive care for infants, children and young people with a wide spectrum of acute and chronic neurological, developmental, behavioural and psychological disorders. The centre takes a multidisciplinary approach and works together to cater to the needs unique to each child and family. The centre sees children upto the age of 16 years and in some special circumstances up to 18 years of age.

Neuropedia.ae

Swedish Specialised Center for Special Needs

Key services Family therapy program, ABA therapy,



speech therapy, occupational therapy, workshops, and training.

Strengths
Involvement of family

in child's therapy; creating a tailor-made family training program to enable parents to enable their children; the consultants at the centre are some of the most prominent figures in the field of inclusion in the UAE; the centre is focused on intervention to prepare for inclusion.

Sscforspecialneeds.com

Milestones Autism Rehabilitation Center



Key services
Multidisciplinary therapy services, applied behaviour analysis therapy, speech and language therapy,

occupational therapy, Early Intervention Program, School Readiness Program, Special Education Day Program, Social Skills Program, registered behaviour technician training, and many more services.

Strengths Highly qualified experienced and licensed professionals, multidisciplinary and multilingual specialists, safe and supportive learning environment, comprehensive and compassionate care, individualised and result-oriented approach and highly efficient and affordable care.

Milestonescenter.ae



A GULF NEWS PUBLICATION

EDITOR Krita Coelho | **HEAD OF CONTENT — SUPPLEMENTS AND CONTRACT PUBLISHING** Sankar Sri Pillai
SENIOR ART EDITORS John Catherall, Nicholas D'Souza | **ASSISTANT ART EDITOR** Pranith Ratheesan | **BUSINESS SUPPORT EXECUTIVE** Fernel Fuentes
HEAD OF SALES — SUPPLEMENTS AND CONTRACT PUBLISHING Sundar Ghosh | **SENIOR ACCOUNT GROUP MANAGER** Tina Bhakthavalsalan
PRE-PRESS SUPERINTENDENT Shaji Varughese | **PRE-PRESS OPERATORS** Yousaf Naeem, Atul Paradkar

CEO AND EDITOR-IN-CHIEF Abdul Hamid Ahmad | **DIRECTOR — SALES AND PUBLISHING** Anshuman Joshi | **PUBLISHER** David George
DESIGN DIRECTOR S.M. Arshad | **PRODUCTION EDITOR** Floyd Gonsalves

Dubai P. O. Box 6519
Editorial: 04 406 7473
Advertising Sales: 04 406 7455
Email: gnfocus@gulfnews.com
Abu Dhabi P. O. Box 7441
Tel: 02 634 5144

Printed and published by Al Nisr Publishing LLC
Distributed by Al Nisr Distribution LLC

MANAGING RESOURCES AND SERVICES DURING THE PANDEMIC

GN FOCUS REPORT

In an exclusive interview with **GN Focus Inas Ktaech**, Clinical Director, The Doris Duan-Young Autism Center (DDY) reveals how the organisation maintained staff and patient morale during the pandemic while simultaneously helping the brand evolve



ways to provide ABA therapy and be the leader in ABA services in the UAE. These innovative and effective ways included providing Crisis Intervention Training to our staff. Being a certified SMG Crisis Intervention trainer, I managed to successfully train and certify all the therapists in DDY. This SMG Training is a proud achievement of DDY as it shows that the center does not only focus on providing excellence with its services but also ensures that the safety of both staff and children is priority at all times.

employment in various settings based on their choice of interests and hobbies. Young adults in DDY are taught basic office or clerical tasks (i.e., typing a document, printing, photocopying, laminating, shredding, delivering documents to staff members etc.). The DDY staff welcome its young adults as they are part of the team by providing them with their own work schedule and DDY uniform.

Did the pandemic affect the Centre adversely, how did you help the team pull through?

We managed to help the center and the clinical team pull through the pandemic in so many remarkable ways. In fact, together with the guidance of DDY management, we even managed to implement several different initiatives and innovations that included:

- Behavior Teleconsultations for parents
- Home sessions with safety kits and training on safety
- Online ABA parent trainings and observations

■ **How did you help the brand evolve over the course of last year?**

Firstly, we continued to develop innovative ideas and effective

■ **Could you shed some light on the Vocational Training programme at DDY?**

Many of the young adults in DDY are currently engaging in various Functional Living Skills programs such as Job Readiness Program, which is part of the center's Vocational Skills Program. This program enhances the young adult's job skills to participate and pursue meaningful

■ **What are some of the unique educational and social skills programmes DDY fronts?**

DDY is dedicated to help support our children throughout the different stages of their development. From a young child learning school readiness skills to a young teenager learning how to navigate the complex realities of their adolescence years and lastly to a young adult learning how to develop vocational skills to increase their independence. DDY thinks it is very important to teach our clients socially acceptable behaviors (i.e., public vs private, appropriate vs inappropriate topics based on your privacy circle, health and hygiene routines and personal boundaries) in order to help provide our young teens and adults with the tools needed to succeed as they move through the stages of their development.

Again, individuals with Autism may have difficulties navigating through the social world. In this regard, social skills training is an integral part of our therapy but due to Covid-19 social distancing restrictions we have been forced to think of new and innovative ways to continue teaching social skills. Therefore, DDY will be using a program called Model Me Kids to teach social skills through video modelling. This would require the student to watch videos that were specifically developed for children on the spectrum on how to conduct themselves in certain social situations. The teaching would involve video modelling and role playing with the therapist.

