

Figure 1 Levels of care in the Saudi Arabia health care system

FOURTH LEVEL Referral hospitals (Medical cities)	Provide specialized diagnostic, curative, surgical and rehabilitative services. In addition, these facilities work as research and teaching centres. They receive referred patients from the third level of care. However, admission to these facilities is very limited.
THIRD LEVEL Central hospitals	Provide advanced diagnostic, curative, surgical and rehabilitative services. Patients who need specialized health services are transferred to the fourth level of care.
SECOND LEVEL General hospitals and peripheral (community) hospitals	Provide diagnostic and curative services through emergency departments, outpatient clinics, hospitalization and minor surgeries. Patients who need a higher level of health services are transferred to the third level of care.
FIRST LEVEL Primary health care	Provide the basic curative, preventive and promotive services. Patients who need a higher level of health services are transferred to the second level of care.