

# Advancing military medical research and training in the Saudi Armed Forces: a call to action

Mohammed G Alkathami <sup>1</sup>, Y A Al Naam <sup>2</sup>, E M Al Zahrani<sup>3</sup>

Saudi Arabia is actively pursuing localising its military industries as part of its Vision 2030 plan, intending to localise 50% of military industries by 2030. However, achieving comprehensive military localisation requires urgent military medical research and training development. The military heavily relies on research and development to effectively carry out its operations, and health and medical research can play a crucial role in supporting military endeavours.<sup>1</sup>

Currently, the Saudi Arabian Armed Forces face challenges in the healthcare sector. While traditional clinical medical research exists, it alone is insufficient to meet the specific needs of the military. The unique nature of military healthcare requires specialised training and research. The existing research centres have limitations when developing training models for specialised medical experts in areas such as military diving and aeronautical medicine. Therefore, it is imperative for academic institutions and research centres affiliated with the military to prioritise military medical teaching, training and research.<sup>2</sup>

The military healthcare system needs improvement to address the distinctive challenges military personnel face. Soldiers often experience traumatic situations and serious injuries that demand specialised treatment. Additionally, the limited scope of research centres hinders the development of training models for military medical experts. These challenges highlight the urgent need to enhance military medical research and training within the Saudi Armed Forces.

There is a lack of comprehensive research and evidence specifically tailored to the military context in Saudi Arabia. While some research exists, there is a

need for more extensive studies on military healthcare, including traumatic injuries, protective equipment for soldiers and innovative approaches for addressing various military scenarios. Collaborative research with international partners can provide a non-partisan perspective and leverage insights from past military missions, contributing to developing effective healthcare strategies.<sup>3</sup>

To address these challenges, the Saudi Arabian Armed Forces should prioritise the following training and research areas. First, military healthcare providers should receive training in field medicine to enhance their capabilities in providing immediate care in combat zones or remote areas. This includes tactical combat casualty care, triage and ATLS training. Second, specialised clinical training in areas such as hyperbaric medicine, mental and psychological health, and nuclear, biological and chemical medicine is essential for treating specific military-related injuries and conditions.<sup>4</sup>

To achieve these goals, collaboration between Saudi Arabian researchers and international experts is crucial. This collaboration will improve the quality of medical services and ensure the safety of Saudi Arabia by generating valuable intelligence for military operations. The Ministry of Defence Health Services (MODHS) and the Saudi Ministry of Defense should work together to enhance military healthcare services through research and training initiatives. By prioritising the development of military medical research and training, the Saudi Armed Forces can ensure the provision of specialised and comprehensive healthcare to military personnel.<sup>5</sup>

Investing in military medical research and training is crucial for the readiness and effectiveness of the Saudi Armed Forces. By focusing on the healthcare needs of military personnel, enhancing training programmes and collaborating on research, better care can be provided to improve overall health.

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### ORCID iDs

Mohammed G Alkathami <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-8284-798X>

Y A Al Naam <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-2280-9527>

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<sup>1</sup>Department of Respiratory Care, Prince Sultan Military College of Health Sciences, Dammam, Saudi Arabia

<sup>2</sup>Department of Clinical Laboratory Science, Prince Sultan Military College of Health Science, Dammam, Saudi Arabia

<sup>3</sup>Department of Biomedical Technology, Prince Sultan Military College of Health Sciences, Dammam, Saudi Arabia

**Correspondence to** Mohammed G Alkathami, Prince Sultan Military College of Health Sciences, Dammam, Saudi Arabia; [malkathami@psmchs.edu.sa](mailto:malkathami@psmchs.edu.sa)