

KFSH Space Medicine Study Ranks Among Top 5% Globally on Altmetric

RIYADH, SAUDI ARABIA, June 14, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- A study led by researchers at King Faisal Specialist Hospital and Research Centre (KFSH), in collaboration with the Saudi Space Agency, has ranked among the top 5% of research worldwide for attention and engagement, according to Altmetric, which tracks the reach and impact of scientific publications. The study explores how spaceflight affects gene expression and how these changes are linked to several molecular networks associated with human health.

Published in Science Advances, a journal of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, the study examined molecular changes in human cells aboard the International Space Station and their potential impact on pathways enriched with genes affecting muscle and cardiac contraction, the neuronal system, and sensory perception. It also identified changes in biological pathways linked to vision, sleep, movement, and DNA repair, which could help improve understanding of spaceflight-related health conditions, including those on Earth. Moreover, the KFSH-SSA patent-pending platform can support the drug development process, including prediction of drug effects and toxicity.

Altmetric is an alternative metric system that measures the attention research output receives beyond traditional academic citations, including coverage in the media, on digital platforms, in public policy documents, and in research data sources.

Dr. Khalid Abu Khabar, a Research Group Leader and Principal Scientist at KFSH who served as the study's Principal Investigator, said the interest this study has attracted beyond academia reflects a broader view of its scientific and societal reach with relevance to one of the societal



questions in space medicine: how human cells respond to space microgravity, how that knowledge can help protect astronaut health and support safer long-duration human spaceflight, and what it may reveal about human health on Earth.

In 2023, KFSH announced that it was leading several cell science experiments in space, in collaboration with the Saudi Space Agency, as part of the first Saudi scientific mission, during which Saudi astronauts Rayyanah Barnawi and Ali Alqarni traveled to the International Space Station. The experiments were conducted aboard the station by Rayyanah Barnawi, formerly a Research Assistant at KFSH, with parallel experiments on Earth performed by Dr. Widjan Alahamdi, a co-investigator on the study.

The Saudi Space Agency also featured the KFSH study as part of its campaign highlighting Saudi research conducted aboard the International Space Station, reflecting the Kingdom's growing contribution to space science and human health research globally.

KFSH continues to strengthen its role in advancing biomedical research in space medicine and human health, supporting studies that examine how space environments affect the body's functions and human diseases. This work helps advance understanding of human health not only in space but also on Earth, and may support the development of future diagnostic and treatment methods.

King Faisal Specialist Hospital has been ranked first in the Middle East and North Africa and 12th globally among the world's top 250 Academic Medical Centers for 2026, and recognized as the most valuable healthcare brand in the Kingdom and the Middle East, according to Brand Finance 2026. It has also been listed by Newsweek among the World's Best Hospitals 2026, the World's Best Smart Hospitals, and the World's Best Specialized Hospitals 2026.

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