

EMPHNET NEWS

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EMPHNET's Word

By: Dr. Mohannad Al Nsour, Executive Director

We all know having the right tool to do a job is very important. A sharp axe is the right tool for cutting down a tree; the sharper the axe, the better. If you focus more time on sharpening the axe and preparing it for use, then the actual task of cutting the tree is more efficient and produces greater results. This newsletter highlights how EMPHNET and the Eastern Mediterranean Region have been “sharpening the axe.” The NCD training courses conducted for health care providers in Ajloun, the two week screening course implemented in Yemen, and the one-week outbreak investigation and response training workshop delivered in Abu Dhabi sharpened the knowledge and skills of the participants. These trainings are part of the preparation that will lead to improvements in public health for the Eastern Mediterranean Region. Drawing back a bow and sending an arrow straight into a target takes only a split second, but it is a skill many years in the making. This all happens in the preparation. As we all know, good things happen when opportunity meets preparation and that is another highlight you will find in this newsletter. The 1st Arab World Conference on Public Health, the 2013 Epidemic Intelligence Service (EIS) Conference, and the Iraqi 1st National Conference in Field Epidemiology are all excellent examples of what happens when preparation is given the time and focus it deserves. The Eastern Mediterranean Region is full of opportunities some are disguised as challenges, others as hard work, but all opportunities just the same. EMPHNET recognizes the importance of preparation and is proud to highlight the preparation this region undertakes to sharpen their axe and the outcomes that result.

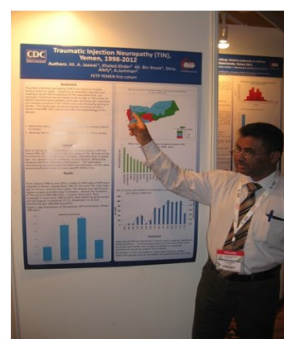
Together, we will continue to sharpen the axe in preparation for the opportunities that await

FETPs Participate in 1st Arab World Conference on Public Health

The Dubai Health Authority and the World Federation of Public Health Associations held the 1st Arab World Conference on Public Health in Dubai, UAE from 4-6 April, 2013 at the Jumeirah Creekside Hotel. The conference, with the theme “Towards Excellence in Public Health: Opportunities and Challenges in the Arab World, brought together public health leaders from different Arab countries and health experts from around the globe to discuss public health issues in the region. The Arab world consists of 22 countries, all with unique characteristics, but most facing the double burden of communicable and non-communicable diseases. Participants presented their abstracts for posters

and oral presentations on topics ranging from the prevalence of type II diabetes to the epidemiology of rabies. Both the Yemen and Egypt FETP residents delivered several oral presentations and posters at this milestone conference. The Yemen FETP residents that presented work were as follows: Dr. Ali A. Jaawal; Dr. Faud Shamsan; Dr. Ahmed H. Al-Shahethi; - Nabiha AL-Abhar; Dr. Aleryani Yaser; Dr. Faisal Daraan; Dr. Mohammed Qassem; Dr. Mohammed Ali Abdellah Saleh. The Egypt FETP residents and graduates that presented work were as follows: Dr. Nasser Hamed; Dr. Manal Labib Fahim; Dr. Shrein Tareef Elnossery; Maisa Mohamed Omara. Both the Yemen and the Egypt FETP residents and graduates did

an outstanding job of representing both the public health challenges and the field epidemiologic work being done in their countries. The Dubai Health Authority and the World Federation of Public Health Associations announced plans for the 2nd Arab World Conference on Public Health and set the dates for 26-28 April, 2014 in Dubai-UAE.



Dr. Ali Jaawal, Yemen FETP Resident, presenting his poster



Physical Activity Practical Training at Sakhra Youth Center



Physical Activity Counseling Training (Basic Level)



Nutritional Counseling Training

comprehensive health care centers in the project and to start physical activity counseling there. Therefore, 16 persons attended another workshop on PA counseling including nurses and doctors from these new health centers (Ishtafina, Kofrangah and Ajloun health centers) in addition to employees from Ajloun health directorate. The aim of the workshop was to train health care providers on physical activity

NCD Project - Ajloun Three Training Courses were Conducted for Health Care Providers

A three training courses took place during April-May, 2013. Top of For... The first workshop was conducted as a continuation of multiple training workshops for health care providers who are part of the NCD project in Ajloun. As part of the NCD project, PA equipments were placed in three health centers in Ajloun to encourage physical activity. Therefore, there was a need to train nurses and doctors on supervising patients when using these equipments. In addition, it is important to follow safety standards in order to minimize side effects and complications. The workshop included 22 participants including nurses and doctors from 6 health centers in Ajloun in addition to employees from Ajloun health directorate. The main aim of the workshop was to provide health care providers in Ajloun health centers with the important knowledge and skills on how to prescribe physical activity for patients according to the patient's condition. Also, the trainer mentioned the physiological background behind many type exercises and its relation to many diseases such as diabetes and hypertension. Moreover, the attendees were learned how to do many type of exercises such as stretching, resistant and aerobic exercise and what kind of exercises should be avoided. The scaling up plan involves including more health centers in Ajloun. EMPHNET decided to include another three

counseling skills. The workshop aimed to trained health care educators on using a psychological behavioral change approach to encourage physical activity in addition to other effective tools. Moreover, it aimed to provide attendees with the recommended amount of physical activity and preferable type of exercise in addition to precautions while doing physical activity. The topics that were discussed during the training included: Physical activity definition, benefits and types, Patient's assessment and referral process, Physical activity counseling steps, and Physical activity precautions. A training manual on PA counseling was prepared and handed out to participants. A third workshop on nutritional counseling was conducted on the 26th-27th, May, 2013. The total number of participants was 26, including doctors, nurses and health educators from the three selected Ajloun health centers (Anjara, Rajeb, Sakhra) and the new health centers as well (Ajloun, Ishtafina, Kofrangah). The main aim of this workshop was to train health care providers on diet counseling by providing them with the necessary knowledge regarding achieving balanced diet, benefits of healthy and balanced diet and clarify the diet recommendations for obese, diabetic and hypertensive patients.

Eastern Mediterranean FETP Representatives Visit the 62nd Annual EIS Conference

Several of EMPHNET's Board of Directors and FETP Directors attended the 62nd annual Epidemic Intelligence Service (EIS) Conference held in Atlanta, Georgia, USA, 22-26 April, 2013. Dr. Amgad Kholy, Egypt FETP Coordinator, Dr. Ibrahim Iblan, Jordan FETP Coordinator, Dr. Asmae Khattabi, from Morocco FETP, Dr. Faris Lami, Resident Advisor, Iraq FETP, and EMPHNET Secretariat Dr. Mohannad Al Nsour and Ms. Samar Abdelnour attended the conference dedicated to showcasing the works of the current EIS "disease detectives." International Night, held on April 24th, is an annual event at the EIS Conference. This event provides an opportunity for FETP residents to deliver scientific oral presentations and posters and defend their research before a panel of judges, subject matter experts, scientists, academicians, and senior level officials in the global. This year, the Eastern Mediterranean Region was proud to have Dr. Zakir Hussain, Pakistan FELTP graduate, accepted as one of the oral presenters for his abstract *Outbreak Investigation of Typhoid Fever in Village Kuwardu, District Skardu, Gilgit-Baltistan Pakistan 2012* and Dr. Zafar Maken, Pakistan FELTP graduate, accepted as a poster presenter for his abstract *Outbreak of Conjunctivitis due to bacterial Streptococcus Pneumoniae- District Sargodha, Pakistan, 2010*.

In addition to attending many interesting sessions during the EIS conference, the Eastern Mediterranean team met with CDC Atlanta to discuss upcoming projects and activities planned for the region including zoonotic diseases, IHR training, and the Eastern Mediterranean Regional Conference planned for December, 2013 in Morocco.



NCD Project - Ajloun Wellness Day 19/June/2013 (Together to Fight NCDs)

The Eastern Mediterranean Public Health Network (EMPHNET), in collaboration with the Ministry of Health, launched a Wellness Day under the slogan (Together to prevent non-communicable diseases) on Wednesday, 06/19/2013 in Ajloun.

The activity, which was held under the patronage of His Excellency the Governor of Ajloun, aimed at increasing community engagement; promoting health awareness for the most common NCDs and their related risk factors: physical inactivity, unhealthy diet and obesity.

The activity included open sessions at the Teachers Club in Ajloun with welcoming speeches by the dignitaries, in addition to scientific and educational lectures about the importance of NCDs prevention and highlights on their prevalence in the country.

The activity also included stations inside and outside the health center to measure height, weight, waist to hip ratio, body mass index, blood pressure, and blood sugar level. Measurements were done by health providers from Ministry of Health including physicians from the Jordan Field Epidemiology Training Program (J-FETP). Other activities including a healthy kitchen activity where nutritionists provided information about preparing healthy food and presented the benefits of each type of food and the amount of calories that each type contains.

Health education stations delivering counseling and distributing health awareness leaflets on the prevention of NCDs were part of the activity.



Screening Training Course in Yemen

The Yemen FETP conducted a two week screening course to select the candidates that will comprise the Y-FETP Second Cohort. The training took place in Sana'a Yemen from 24th May, 2013 to 5th June, 2013. Trainers for the screening course consisted of Dr. Abdelwahed Al-Serouri, Technical Advisor, Yemen FETP; Dr. Mohamed Qayad, prospective Resident Advisor for the Yemen FETP; Dr. Sa'ad Kharabshah, former Minister of Health, Jordan and EMPHNET representative; and Dr. Lisa Bryde, CDC, Atlanta.

The trainers carefully observed the twenty-four participants and based on class participation, exam scores and a face-to-face interview, scored and commented on each for final selection by the selection committee.

The selection committee, comprised of Yemen Ministry of Health/FETP

officials and WHO representatives, Dr. Abdul-Hakim Ali Al-Kohlani, Dr. Ali Mohammed Ben Break, Dr. Osama Mere'e, and Dr. Ali Al-Mudhwahi met on June 26th, 2013 and the following candidates were chosen for the Yemen FETP Second Cohort. They are as follows: Dr. Fahd Mohammed Mohammed Al-Hapale, Dr. Nabil Mohammed Mahdi Al-Abhar, Dr. Awadh Mohammed Ba Saleh, Dr. Aref Saif Salem Al-Ahmady, Dr. Omer Fadhel Omair Saleh, Dr. Manal Salem Baayees, Dr. Ishraq Nagi Alfalahi, Dr. Noaman Abdulrazzaq Omer Ben Awayed, Dr. Qais Mohjhed Morshed Jassar, Dr. Abdo Mohammed Abdo Mohammed, Dr. Waleed Abdul Galil Yasin Al-Husseiny, Dr. Mohammed Abdullah Mana'e Al-Amad.

And five candidates were also chosen as alternates. They are as follows: Dr. Adel Ali Ahmed Al-Shamiry, Dr.

Tawfiq Ali Al-Raboui, Dr. Ghazi Saleh Awadh Bashemkha, Dr. Hmoud Yahya Mahyoun, Dr. Mohammed Hasa Daifallah Dahnani. Congratulations to both the chosen candidates and the alternates and much congratulations to the Yemen Ministry of Health in the expansion of the FETP.



1st National Conference in Field Epidemiology—Iraq

Iraqi 1st National Conference in Field Epidemiology was conducted on 1st-2nd June, 2013 in Thiqr Governorate.

The main goal was to gather all FETP residents, graduates, their mentors and policy makers to ensure: sharing experience, advocate for the program, making the results of their projects reach the decision maker, enhance evidence based decisions, highlight the most relevant PH problems, explore ideas and thoughts for more in depth research, and networking with different regional and international agencies.

300 participants from different Iraq governorates including six director general of health directorates, FETP residents and graduates, PH officials from central and peripheral levels, university professors, other health personnel and local governorates officials.

The conference included an opening session including statements of the DG PH, DG Thiqr DOH, FETP executive director and a guest lecture by EMPHNET director Dr Mohannad Al Nsour. Four scientific sessions over the two days including 19 oral presentations selected out of about 45 submitted abstracts mainly from FETP residents and graduates. The first session concentrated on outbreak investigation, and includes five presentations on Cutaneous leishmaniasis outbreak in Misan, Hepatitis A outbreak among Syrian refugees, hepatitis E outbreak in Babel province, cholera outbreak in Kirkuk province, and Thallium outbreak in Kirkuk province. The second session was on epidemiology of communicable diseases, and includes presentation on asymptomatic kalaazar, cupping as a risk factor of hepatitis B, TB among prisoners, KAP study on HIV/AIDS, and acute bacterial meningitis in Kerkh / Baghdad. The third session concentrated on epidemiology of NCDs and injuries, and includes also five presentations on RTI in Misan, chronic renal failure epidemiology in southern provinces, hypertension in Thiqr province, prevalence and epidemiology of diabetic retinopathy and risk factors of breast cancer. The fourth session was on evaluation of health programs and includes four presentations on infrastructure of hemodialysis in Iraq, adverse events of BCG, TB contact tracing, and evaluation of rapid test of Hepatitis B. A closing session includes the main recommendations on the end of the two days. During the scientific session a fruitful discussion tackled important PH problem directly relevant to the southern provinces of Iraq. Prior to the conference there was a side cultural meeting with two presentations on the human resources development presented by DG Misan DOH and DG Basra GOH.

The main recommendations of the conference include:

1. The need to hold such a conference annually and in different provinces. (The coming conference will be held in Basra)
2. Provision of financial and logistic support the FETP residents to conduct their investigation
3. Ensure finding training opportunities to FETP residents in US CDC.
4. Conducting a workshop to further search for control of leishmaniasis in the southern provinces with collaboration of other agencies including EMPHNET
5. Collaboration with different stakeholders (including CDC, EMPHNET, WHO) to upgrade the health services provided during mass gathering.
6. Establishing the FETP unit in provincial DOHs run by FETP graduates.
7. Conducting study to determine viral hepatitis risk factor in Iraq.



Iraqi Team Visit to Jordan

A team of Iraqi doctors and public health professionals guided by Dr. Zamel, General Director of Misan Health Directorate visited Jordan to benefit from the MoH-CDC-EMPHNET project in Ajloun on non-communicable diseases. EMPHNET took the team on field visits to Ajloun governorate to have a look on the health centers included in the project and to get an idea about the project plan and activities.

This visit aimed to increase ways of exchanging experience and knowledge in addition to evaluate the NCD programs in the region. Iraqi team will run an NCD project at Misan governorate similar to EMPHNET's project in Ajloun governorate. This project aims to decrease the prevalence of NCDs in Misan governorate. The team also has visited Jordan MoH– Primary Health Care Department to discuss the different programs that being conducted through this department.



Healthy Kitchen Activity during Iraqi Team Visit to Jordan - Ajloun Governorate



Corona Virus Updates

Coronavirus infections

Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses that includes viruses that may cause a range of illnesses in humans, from the common cold to SARS. Viruses of this family also cause a number of animal diseases.

Novel coronavirus or Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS):

The new strain of the coronavirus detected first in Kingdom of Saudi Arabia 2012 from a 60 years old patient who died of the disease. Human to human transmission is only seen in close family contacts and health care facilities.

Most patients are male 72%. Cases reported respiratory complaints include Acute Respiratory Distress Syndrome, renal failure, coagulopathy, pericarditis and diarrhea. Virus continue to infect middle age and older people, though children are also infected. It seems that comorbid factors play an important role in transmission of virus.

As of 13 July 2013, 82 cases and 45 deaths are reported from Jordan, Qatar, KSA, UAE, France, Germany, the United Kingdom (UK), Italy and Tunisia. All of the European and North African cases have had a direct or indirect connection to the Middle East. In addition France, the UK, Tunisia and Italy, reported limited local transmission among close contacts, who had not been to the Middle East as well.

Incubation period of the known or strongly suspected cases, are generally less than a week. In one cases exposure occurred 9-12 days prior to the onset of the illness, further evidence suggest that, at least in a minority of cases, the incubation period may exceed one week but is less than two weeks.

Human-to-human transmission has not been observed to persist beyond small clusters of individuals with close contact. However, it is likely that more sporadic cases with subsequent limited transmission will occur in the near future. Corona viruses are widely seen in bats, birds, cats, dogs, pigs, mice, horses, whales and humans. For the MERS-CoV still it is not established that which animal and secondary vehicle are playing roles in the transmission of the infection.

No specific treatment proved to be effective. Treatment is supportive and symptomatic. However researchers claimed that interferon types I and III reduce viral replication in cell culture of human airway epithelium and two licensed antiviral drugs which are ribavirin and interferon alpha 2a can inhibit replication of the virus in cell cultures. It is important to implement World Health Organization's recommendations while treating the suspected and confirmed cases of MERS.

However that WHO did not recommend any travel related recommendation but Ministry of Health Saudi Arabia, has requested from elderly people and chronically ill patients e.g. heart, kidney, respiratory diseases or diabetes not to perform haj this year. People with immunodeficiency, children and pregnant women are also in this list.

Public Health Recommendations:

- Enhance public health surveillance systems especially Severe Acute Respiratory Illness (SARI) Surveillance. One has to pay special attention on clusters of pneumonia among health care providers and or families. Also all unusual patterns should be carefully reviewed and investigated.
- Systematic use of infection prevention and control measures in the health care setting are vital for prevention of MERS. Especially adherence to standard infection control precautions while dealing with the patients and adding the droplet infection control measures to deal with the suspected or known respiratory infections include MERS. Facilities that host suspected and or confirmed cases of MERS-CoV infection should take appropriate measure to reduce the risk of transmission to other patients, visitors and health care workers.

Health care providers are advised to maintain vigilance. Recent travelers returning from the Middle East who develop SARI should be tested for MERS-CoV as advised in the current surveillance recommendations. Specimens from patients' lower respiratory tracts should be obtained for diagnosis where possible. Clinicians are reminded that MERS-CoV infection should be considered even with atypical signs and symptoms, such as diarrhea, in patients who are immune compromised.

Outbreak Investigation and Response Training Workshop

The “Outbreak Investigation and Response Training Workshop” is a standard course designed by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) for building public health capacity. This course was used after adapting it to meet the needs of the Health Authority - Abu Dhabi (HAAD). The course material was used to conduct training in Abu Dhabi, as per a request from HAAD.

This workshop was conducted over a five days period, 7-11 April, 2013. The first day was an introductory day where EMPHNET met with HAAD staff for a briefing on the HAAD’s function and role. Details of the training were discussed during this day. The official training on outbreak investigation and response was conducted over a three days period with participation of major stakeholders from Abu Dhabi. The last day of the workshop focused on Outbreak Response and Management to assist HAAD in developing standards for outbreak management in the emirate of Abu Dhabi.

The workshop was conducted under the leadership of the Head of the Communicable Diseases Control Division at HAAD / Dr. Farida Al Hosni, on behalf of the Director General of Health / Dr. The workshop embarked on initiating and fostering support and advocacy for developing standard outbreak investigation procedures and management systems. And facilitated by Dr. Mo-hannad AlNsour, Dr. Jawad Mofleh, Dr. Adel Belbisi, Ms. Samar AbdelNour, Dr. Farida Al Hosni, and Dr. Mariam Abdella Mohammad.

The overall goal of this workshop was to bring together major stakeholders involved in outbreak detection, investigation and response within the health care system, in an effort to build a platform for investigation and response to diseases in Abu Dhabi. Another major goal of the workshop was to provide input for developing outbreak response and management standards for Abu Dhabi, and define the roles and responsibilities of major stakeholders in managing outbreaks.

