

Current major event

Fifth Meeting and Second Scientific Conference of EMARIS

WHO, in collaboration with US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), organized the Fifth Meeting of the Eastern Mediterranean Acute Respiratory Surveillance (EMARIS) Network in conjunction with the Second Scientific Conference on Acute Respiratory Infections in the Eastern Mediterranean Region. The meeting was held between 12 and 15 of November in Casablanca, Morocco and brought together 46 experts, 50 researchers and many representatives from ministries of health of the Region.

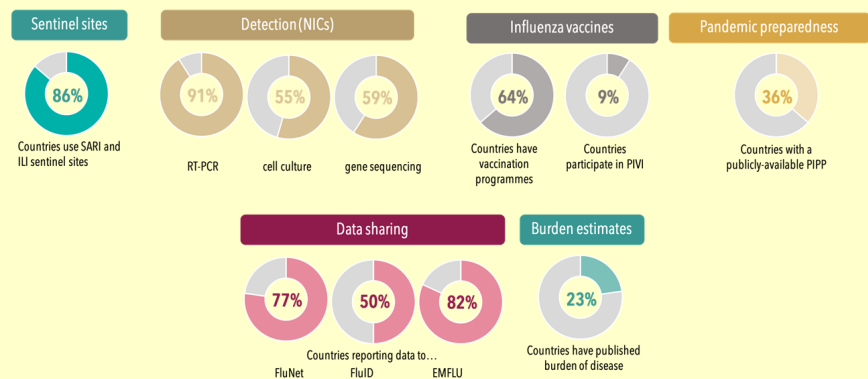
Editorial note

The capacities of Eastern Mediterranean Regional countries in influenza detection, prevention and control have made a notable increase over the past decade. EMARIS meetings, that occur biennially, provide a forum for information and experience sharing between different stakeholders, to track progress and draw lessons learnt that are important for pandemic influenza preparedness. Centred on the theme of 'better data, better policy, better action', this year's meeting was designed to support increasing quality data generation (from local surveillance systems) for more evidence-informed public health policy-making. For more information about meeting objectives, please see previous WEM on EMARIS 2019 [here](#).

The EMARIS 2019 event was attended by over 180 participants. Discussions spanned in nine thematic areas and took place over seven expert panel discussions and 50 research abstract presentations (30 in plenary form and 20 during a poster exhibition). Those abstracts were selected by an expert review committee that vigorously vetted the 172 scientific abstracts initially submitted—clear evidence that influenza and emerging respiratory disease research has become a significant research topic of interest within the Region. Additionally, four skill-building workshops were conducted by expert to provide an insight into pandemic preparedness in conflict contexts, data analysis using EPIINFO, latest outbreak investigation techniques and common communication issues in influenza vaccine promotion.

Throughout the event, global and regional experts presented the overview situation of influenza programmes in EMR with respect to various indicators. Countries also had the opportunity to share their experiences through presentations and plenary discussions. Considerable achievements have been made across the Region in the areas of influenza surveillance, detection, and data reporting and use (see *summary of programme status*

Summary of current status of influenza surveillance programmes in EMR



EMARIS 2019 recommendations

- Support early detection by building capacities and filling knowledge gaps strategically.
- Enhance and expand prevention capacities by increasing capacity for seasonal influenza and investing in non-pharmaceutical measures.
- Develop, update and test pandemic preparedness plans and influenza vaccine deployment plans.
- Strengthen evidence base by increasing studies on burden of disease and economic burden.
- Synergize and integrate influenza with other disease programmes.
- Work in partnership to align plans with global strategies and research.
- Promote the One Health approach.
- Improve risk communication and community engagement.
- Be flexible and pragmatic by adapting systems and tailoring solutions to local contexts.

in figure).

Despite those achievements, countries still face multiple challenges in introducing or expanding influenza programmes. Such challenges include: complex operational contexts, increasing fragility, the dynamic nature of the virus and its ability to infect multiple hosts, variability in host immunity, patchy vaccine performance, slow vaccine manufacturing timelines, vaccine hesitancy, quality and completeness of surveillance data, gaps in pandemic preparedness planning, and limited animal surveillance and coordination. Accordingly, a broad range of recommendations emerged from the four-day deliberations (see *list above*).

WHO, in collaboration with US-CDC and other global partners, continues to support countries in strengthening influenza systems, set the global research priorities, link global efforts to country priorities, facilitate knowledge exchange and collaboration and promote the One Health approach. Working together is the way forward to prevent, detect and respond to the threat of influenza and save lives.

Update on outbreaks

in the Eastern Mediterranean Region

MERS in Saudi Arabia; **cholera** in Sudan; **cholera** in Somalia; **cholera** in Yemen; **multidrug-resistant typhoid fever** in Pakistan.

Current public health events of concern

[cumulative N° of cases (deaths), CFR %]

Avian influenza: 2006-2017

Egypt (A/H5N1)	[359 (122), 33.98%]
Egypt (A/H9N2)	[4 (0)]

Ebola virus disease (EVD): 2018-2019

Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)	[3 313 (2 203), 66.49%]
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Cholera: 2017-2019

Somalia	[9 258 (48), 0.52%]
Yemen	[2 188 503 (3 750), 0.17%]
Sudan	[338 (11), 3.25%]

Diphtheria: 2018-2019

Yemen	[4 788 (281), 5.87%]
Bangladesh	[8 902 (45), 0.51%]

MERS: 2012-2019

Saudi Arabia	[2 102 (780), 37.11%]
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Multidrug-resistant typhoid fever: 2016-2019

Pakistan	[14 176 (0)]
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