

Summary report on the

Regional workshop for the dissemination of new WHO consolidated guidelines on HIV treatment and care

WHO-EM/STD/158/E

Casablanca, Morocco
9–10 September 2013



**World Health
Organization**

Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean

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1. Introduction

The WHO Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean organized a regional workshop for the dissemination of the new 2013 WHO Consolidated guidelines on HIV treatment and care, in Casablanca, Morocco, on 9–10 September 2013. The workshop aimed at introducing stakeholders to the 2013 WHO guidelines on the use of antiretroviral therapy, explaining the implications on service delivery and programmatic planning along the continuum of care and discussing and planning the roll-out of the guidelines in the Region.

The objectives of the workshop were to:

- introduce and discuss the 2013 WHO consolidated guidelines on the use of antiretroviral drugs for treating and preventing HIV infection;
- review the clinical, operational and programmatic implications of the new guidelines for the Region; and
- prepare draft outlines for country roll-out plans, including the priority actions for country adaptation and support needs.

The expected outcomes of the workshop were that countries gain an improved understanding of the 2013 WHO recommendations on the use of antiretroviral drugs and of their operational and programmatic implications for national HIV/AIDS programmes in the Region and that country roll-out plans were drafted by the end of the meeting.

Participants included national AIDS programme managers, HIV clinical experts, representatives of civil society and organizations of people living with HIV and partner UN agencies.

WHO guidelines have greatly facilitated HIV treatment expansion; globally progress has been impressive, with almost 10 million people in low- and middle-income countries receiving lifesaving antiretroviral therapy at the end of last year. However, the scale-up of HIV treatment in the Eastern Mediterranean Region has not followed global momentum. The Region still has, at 14%, the lowest treatment coverage in the world. The new guidelines, with new clinical recommendations and guidance on key operational and programmatic issues, have important implications for the Region's efforts to strengthen access and quality of HIV treatment.

WHO calls for earlier HIV treatment, with safe, affordable, and easier-to-manage medicines that have the dual benefits of keeping patients healthy and also reducing the risk of onward transmission of the virus. Dr Ala Alwan, WHO Regional Director for the Eastern Mediterranean, in his opening message called on countries to work urgently on finding the right approaches that would ensure that more people living with HIV are diagnosed early and are linked to care where they can receive quality treatment.

2. Conclusions and the way forward

The regional meeting was a good opportunity to present in detail the new WHO guidelines and to discuss the implications for the Region. There was lively discussion on the rationale for the different clinical recommendations and also the service delivery guidance. Several countries presented their experience (successes and challenges) in HIV treatment and the unique ways the new recommendations will be implemented and how they will influence HIV treatment outcomes.

HIV treatment coverage in the Region is low and biggest gap along the continuum of care lies with the inability of countries to identify those living with HIV. There was a special session during the meeting on HIV testing where staff of WHO headquarters presented innovative HIV testing strategies and discussed ways that the Region can use a mix of different strategies to maximize efforts to diagnose people living with HIV.

During group work, participants discussed the implications of the new guidelines for their country and developed draft roadmap for guideline adaptation and roll-out. Each country was asked in particular to work through three questions: their plans in terms of revising national policies in view of new WHO guidelines; the challenges they anticipated; and the support needed from WHO.

The Regional Office has compiled the different support needs from countries. Adaptation and roll-out of the new guidelines is one of the regional priorities for the remainder of 2013 and 2014.

During her closing remarks, Dr Gabriele Riedner, Regional Adviser, HIV/AIDS and Sexually Transmitted Infections, said that implementation of the new guidelines would help greatly help to increase coverage of antiretroviral therapy in the Region. To reap the significant benefits of HIV treatment at the individual and public health levels, all countries should consider the new recommendations in their national HIV policies, plans and treatment guidelines. WHO remains committed to supporting countries to translate the new recommendations into practice, adapted to local contexts.



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