

Summary report on the

WHO-EM/CEH/165/E

**Expert consultation for
finalization of the regional
framework for the public
health response to chemical
events and for establishing a
regional network of poison
centres for IHR implementation**

Amman, Jordan
16–18 February 2019



REGIONAL OFFICE FOR THE

**World Health
Organization**

Eastern Mediterranean

Summary report on the

**Expert consultation for finalization of
the regional framework for the public
health response to chemical events
and for establishing a regional
network of poison centres for IHR
implementation**

Amman, Jordan
16–18 February 2019



**World Health
Organization**

REGIONAL OFFICE FOR THE **Eastern Mediterranean**

© World Health Organization 2019

Some rights reserved. This work is available under the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 3.0 IGO licence (CC BY-NC-SA 3.0 IGO); <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/3.0/igo>.

Under the terms of this licence, you may copy, redistribute and adapt the work for non-commercial purposes, provided the work is appropriately cited. In any use of this work, there should be no suggestion that WHO endorses any specific organization, products or services. The use of the WHO logo is not permitted. If you adapt the work, then you must license your work under the same or equivalent Creative Commons licence. If you create a translation of this work, you should add the following disclaimer along with the suggested citation: “This translation was not created by the World Health Organization (WHO). WHO is not responsible for the content or accuracy of this translation. The original English edition shall be the binding and authentic edition”.

Any mediation relating to disputes arising under the licence shall be conducted in accordance with the mediation rules of the World Intellectual Property Organization.

Suggested citation. [Title]. Cairo: WHO Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean; 2019. Licence: CC BY-NC-SA 3.0 IGO.

Sales, rights and licensing. To purchase WHO publications, see <http://apps.who.int/bookorders>. To submit requests for commercial use and queries on rights and licensing, see <http://www.who.int/about/licensing>.

Third-party materials. If you wish to reuse material from this work that is attributed to a third party, such as tables, figures or images, it is your responsibility to determine whether permission is needed for that reuse and to obtain permission from the copyright holder. The risk of claims resulting from infringement of any third-party-owned component in the work rests solely with the user.

General disclaimers. The designations employed and the presentation of the material in this publication do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of the World Health Organization concerning the legal status of any country, territory, city or area or of its authorities, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries. Dotted lines on maps represent approximate border lines for which there may not yet be full agreement.

The mention of specific companies or of certain manufacturers' products does not imply that they are endorsed or recommended by the World Health Organization in preference to others of a similar nature that are not mentioned. Errors and omissions excepted, the names of proprietary products are distinguished by initial capital letters.

All reasonable precautions have been taken by the World Health Organization to verify the information contained in this publication. However, the published material is being distributed without warranty of any kind, either expressed or implied. The responsibility for the interpretation and use of the material lies with the reader. In no event shall the World Health Organization be liable for damages arising from its use.

Contents

1.	Introduction.....	1
2.	Summary of discussions	1
3.	Action points.....	2
4.	Recommendations.....	3

1. Introduction

An expert consultation to finalize the regional framework for the public health response to chemical events and establish a regional network of poison centres for implementation of the International Health Regulations 2005 (IHR) was held in Amman, Jordan, on 16–18 February 2019. The consultation was attended by experts from poison centres and chemical safety departments in 16 countries of the Region, as well as WHO staff from headquarters, and regional and country office levels.

The objectives of the meeting were to:

- develop a regional framework on public health preparedness and response to chemical events;
- introduce and train poison centre staff from 10 Eastern Mediterranean Region countries on a toxic chemical inventory database and to see if further database updating is required;
- discuss and identify requirements for regionalizing the database;
- discuss procedures to identify the 10 most toxic chemicals at the regional as well as national level, if possible; and
- discuss the establishment of a regional network of poison centres in the Eastern Mediterranean Region and its terms of reference.

2. Summary of discussions

Several major challenges face the countries of the Region, particularly the low-income countries, with regard to the public health response to chemical events. These include the lack of public awareness and a culture of safety with regard to handling chemicals, as well as a lack of up-to-date databases and experienced human resources to carry out risk assessments of chemicals. Additionally, there is a lack of legislative frameworks and enforcement mechanisms, overlapping mandates between sectors, and multi-stakeholder responsibilities for

chemicals management, as well as a delay in establishing national mechanisms to secure coherence and synergies.

The capacity to detect, monitor and manage chemical events for IHR implementation is lacking in most of developing and least-developed countries of the Region (Groups 2 and 3). At a regional level, and as indicated by the joint external assessment missions in 18 countries of the Region, this capacity is scored at about 2.5 out of 5 (varying from 2 to 4).

Common other gaps include the lack of coordination between the relevant stakeholders, poor surveillance and risk communication systems, poorly-equipped poison centres, and weak clinical management capacities in most countries.

In addition to these risks, the Region faces a unique set of circumstances, including political instability and natural disasters, that hinder progress in IHR implementation in relation to chemical events (such as the establishment of poison centres in Syrian Arab Republic and Sudan).

Countries highlighted certain challenges in the Region, including gaps in coordination at the national and regional level, shortages in financial resources and qualified personnel, and a lack of legal instruments and/or their application. For example, not all participating poison centres are mandated to cover the whole of their countries on a 24/7 basis.

3. Action points

- All participating poison centres agreed to be focal points for the regional network of poison centres, and requested other poison centres of the Region to join the network.
- Participants agreed to a scientific collaboration between countries to develop a research paper for publication that would include

statistical analysis of the data received from poison centres in countries of the Region for 2018. Dr Shahin Shadnia, Loghman-Hakim Poison Centre, Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran, Dr Naima Rhalem, Poison Control and Pharmacovigilance Centre of Morocco, Rabat, Morocco, and Professor Nozha Brahmi, Centre Anti-Poison, Tunis, Tunisia, are responsible for data analysis and preparing the research for publication, while Dr Suhad Al-Khassawneh, National Drug and Poison Information Center, University of Jordan Hospital, Amman, Jordan, will coordinate the process between different countries, and Dr Muhammad Amir, Drug and Poison Information Centre, Pharmacy Services, Aga Khan University Hospital, Pakistan, will review the drafted article(s).

- There is a need for an online platform; as a start, this can be an unofficial listserv email group or WhatsApp group. Dr Suhad Al-Khassawneh will initiate a WhatsApp group.
- The global listserv INTOX-General (a closed e-mail discussion group for members of the INTOX Network) will be introduced to everyone interested in joining the global poison centres network so that they can obtain information on toxicology, expert opinions, alerts, and poisoning incidents around the world.

4. Recommendations

To Member States

1. Nominate a focal point so that only one referral poison centre represents each country.
2. In countries with more than one poison centre, such as Egypt and Islamic Republic of Iran, establish a national network to connect them in order to standardize their data.
3. Initiate efforts to mobilize external resources to bridge the gap in financial resources, in collaboration with partners and donor agencies.

To WHO

4. Begin implementation of the regional framework of action on public health preparedness and response to chemical events in collaboration with countries of the Eastern Mediterranean Region.
5. Hold regular meetings for country poison centre focal points, possibly every two years, with virtual meetings every year, or during the annual IHR stakeholders meeting.
6. Update the WHO world directory of poison centres at the global and regional level.
7. Initiate a project, with the support of the Regional Centre for Environmental Health Action (CEHA), to help countries of the Region identify their 10 most toxic chemicals through the development of a chemical depository database and proper risk chemical assessment.
8. Inform the IHR Committee on the outcomes of this expert consultation meeting regarding the regional chemical events framework and focal points for poison centres in countries of the Region.



World Health Organization
Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean
P.O. Box 7608, Nasr City 11371
Cairo, Egypt
www.emro.who.int