

Summary report on the

**Fourth meeting of the WHO  
collaborating centres in  
the Eastern Mediterranean  
Region**

WHO-EM/RPC/045/E

Muscat, Oman  
9–10 January 2019



REGIONAL OFFICE FOR THE

**World Health  
Organization**

**Eastern Mediterranean**

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## Contents

1.	Introduction.....	1
2.	Summary of discussions .....	2
3.	Recommendations.....	5
4.	List of country participants attending the meeting.....	7

## **1. Introduction**

A World Health Organization (WHO) collaborating centre (WHO CC) is an institution designated by the WHO Director-General to form part of an international collaborative network carrying out activities in support of the Organization's work. Designation of a qualified institution as a WHO CC recognizes a history of collaboration with WHO and provides a formal framework for future joint activities. It is a time-limited contract of collaboration during which the institution agrees to implement concrete activities designed to support WHO's programme of work. The findings of a 2016 WHO CC performance assessment survey revealed gaps that need action at both WHO and collaborating centre levels.

In this context, the fourth meeting of WHO CCs in the Eastern Mediterranean Region was held in Muscat, Oman, from 9 to 10 January 2019. Participants included directors of WHO CCs working in the Region from different Member States, namely Bahrain, Egypt, Islamic Republic of Iran, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Morocco, Oman, Pakistan, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Tunisia and United Arab Emirates. The meeting was also attended by WHO staff from different technical units and departments.

The objectives of the meeting were to:

- review the updated rules and policies regulating (re)designation of a WHO CC and streamlining their collaboration with WHO's programme of work;
- discuss the findings of the WHO CC survey and agree on needed actions to address the identified gaps;
- discuss the challenges faced by WHO CCs in implementation of planned activities in collaboration with WHO; and
- orient WHO CCs with regards to Vision 2023.

The meeting was inaugurated by H.E. Dr Ahmed bin Mohamed bin Obaid Al Saidi, Minister of Health, Oman, and Dr Ahmed Al-Mandhari, WHO Regional Director for the Eastern Mediterranean. In his opening remarks, Dr Al-Mandhari welcomed participants and noted that the Region hosted 45 WHO CCs, amounting to about 5% of all WHO CCs globally (currently 832 centres), despite accounting for about 10% of the global population, highlighting untapped resources and opportunities for establishing more WHO CCs in the Region.

## **2. Summary of discussions**

### *Situation analysis*

The Eastern Mediterranean Region has 45 designated WHO CCs, with one each in Bahrain, Egypt, Oman and Qatar, two each in Kuwait, Lebanon, Tunisia, Sudan and United Arab Emirates, three in Saudi Arabia, four each in Jordan, Morocco and Pakistan, and 16 in Islamic Republic of Iran.

New areas suggested for collaboration include the following (with sub-themes):

- health emergencies (International Health Regulations/ports of entry, disaster risk reduction, emergency preparedness and response, influenza, response to chemical and radiation emergencies);
- communicable diseases (diarrhoeal diseases and cholera, hepatitis, immunology, leishmaniasis, leprosy, malaria, neglected tropical diseases, poliomyelitis, respiratory infections, rheumatic diseases, zoonosis);
- noncommunicable diseases and their risk factors (nutrition, child oncology, chronic obstructive pulmonary diseases, congenital blood diseases, rheumatic fever and heart disease, autism

spectrum disorders, dementia, suicide and self-harm, child and adolescent mental health);

- women, child health, violence and disabilities (gender studies, inclusive rehabilitation and assistive technologies, health legislation and human rights, injuries, violence and accident prevention, social determinants of health, neonatal health for control of possible serious bacterial infection, child health for early childhood development);
- environmental and occupational health (biological and chemical safety, environmental health, food safety, healthy cities/schools, occupational health and safety);
- health systems development (family practice, community and primary health care, community-based initiatives, health care financing, health system governance, hospital management);
- information, evidence and research (health information system development, guideline development and adaptation, telemedicine and mHealth, improving cause of death certification and analysis).

### *Global perspectives, policies and procedures*

The historical background to WHO CCs was presented, as well as their key characteristics, scope, procedures for (re)designation, funding, annual reports, and related policies. The eCC electronic system and WHO CC database were described, and misconceptions, intellectual property rights and branding discussed. WHO CC global networks, both bilateral and multilateral, were outlined, including those for antimicrobial resistance, bioethics, environmental health, Global Influenza Surveillance and Response System, health promotion, hepatitis, nursing and midwifery, tobacco control, radiation emergency medical preparedness and assistance, traditional medicine, and the WHO Family of International Classifications.

*Examples of good practice and challenges*

Examples of good practice were shared by selected WHO CCs from the Region. This included the: WHO CC for Research and Development in Medical Education in Ismailia, Egypt; WHO CC for Training and Research on Women's Health Issues in Amman, Jordan; WHO CC for Training and Research on Potable Water and Hygiene in Rabat, Morocco; WHO CC for Quality and Patient Safety Training in Muscat, Oman; WHO CC for Bioethics in Karachi, Pakistan; and WHO CC for Mass Gatherings Medicine in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.

*Aligning the work of WHO CCs in the Region with GPW 13, the SDGs and Vision 2023*

Information was presented on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), in particular SDG 3 (Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages) and its targets, WHO's thirteenth general programme of work (GPW 13) and its pillars, and WHO's regional Vision 2023. Different modalities for improving WHO CC functions and addressing the related challenges were discussed.

*National network of WHO CCs in Islamic Republic of Iran: experience and prospects*

The establishment of the national network of WHO CCs in Islamic Republic of Iran was presented as an example for countries in the Region, and its composition, activities, outcomes and areas of collaboration were described.



*Developing the future agenda for WHO CCs*

Participants were divided into groups based on the following technical areas: communicable diseases; health information, emergencies and environmental health; health systems strengthening; noncommunicable diseases and mental health; and reproductive, maternal, child and adolescent health. The groups discussed the future agenda for WHO CCs in the Region, proposed actions to support WHO's programme of work (in line with the SDGs and Vision 2023) and new areas for collaboration. In addition, participants discussed the WHO CC designation process, work plan development, communication, work plan implementation and suggested ways forward.

Challenges identified by participants included the lengthy nature of the designation process, a lack of knowledge of WHO's priorities and agenda, the turnover of responsible officers at WHO and WHO CCs without adequate handover, a lack of regular communication with the responsible WHO technical staff, the lack of monitoring modalities and difficulties with the WHO eCC-system.

**3. Recommendations***To WHO*

1. Improve adherence to WHO CC policies and procedures, using WHO guides.
2. Foster/expand the work and mandate of existing WHO CCs to further support WHO's programme of work.
3. Propose additional activities to be included in new work plans with WHO CCs that are in line with the SDGs, GPW 13 and the regional Vision 2023.

4. Establish better communication modalities between WHO CCs and WHO during the designation process and for the implementation and reporting of the work plan, including the use of online networking, such as through the EZcollab platform.
5. Hold regular meetings, both virtual and in person, and capacity-building workshops for directors and WHO responsible officers/technical staff.
6. Conduct field visits to WHO CCs to discuss gaps and troubleshoot potential problems during work plan implementation.
7. Mobilize the logistical, technical and fiscal resources needed (on both sides) to implement the agreed-upon work plans.
8. Identify regional and national centres that have the potential to be considered for designation as a WHO CC (especially in new areas of work), and begin collaboration with them as a prerequisite for designation, according to identified selection criteria.
9. Support networking between WHO CCs within Member States, among those in the same areas of work in the Region and across WHO regions.
10. Enhance the role of WHO country offices in facilitating communication between WHO CCs and WHO technical staff and counterparts.
11. Conduct an impact assessment and evaluation of the (re)designation process.
12. Establish and apply innovative ways for networking at different levels.
13. Facilitate the securing of funds and mobilization of resources.
14. Document success stories and best practices, and share with countries using various communication channels, including the Eastern Mediterranean Health Journal.
15. Build the capacity of WHO CCs in health diplomacy and other areas of concern and strategic direction for WHO.

#### **4. List of country participants attending the meeting**

- Dr Omar Abdelhamid, WHO Collaborating Centre for Cancer Education, Training and Research, Academic and Training Center, King Hussein Cancer Center, Amman, Jordan
- Dr Najoua Abderrara, WHO Collaborating Centre for Training and Research in Reproductive Health, National Board for Family and Population, International Training and Research Center in Reproductive Health and Population, Tunis, Tunisia
- Dr Rashid Al-Abri, WHO Collaborating Centre for Quality and Patient Safety Training, Quality Assurance Center, Ministry of Health, Muscat, Oman
- Dr Manal Alawi Al Alawi, Assistant Undersecretary for Primary Health Care, Manama, Bahrain
- Dr Ali Al-Dalaan, WHO Collaborating Centre for Medical Devices Regulation, Saudi Food and Drug Administration, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia
- Dr Mijbel Alnajjar, WHO Collaborating Centre for Family of International Classifications, Health Information and Medical Records, Ministry of Health, Kuwait City, Kuwait
- Ms Nawal Al Otaibi, Manager for Training and Development National Family Safety Program, King Abdulaziz Medical City, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia
- Dr Bagher Amirheidari, Director for International Relations, Kerman University of Medical Sciences, Kerman, Islamic Republic of Iran
- Dr Asma Arabi, WHO Collaborating Centre for Metabolic Bone Disorders, Associate Professor of Medicine/Assistant Director, Calcium Metabolism and Osteoporosis Program, Beirut, Lebanon
- Dr Hanan Balkhy, WHO Collaborating Centre for Infection Prevention and Control and Anti-Microbial Resistance, Infection Prevention and Control Department, King Abdulaziz Medical City Hospital, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia

- Dr Jagan Baskaradoss, WHO Collaborating Centre for Primary Oral Health Care, Faculty of Dentistry, University of Kuwait, Kuwait City, Kuwait
- Dr Hanane Benqlilou, WHO Collaborating Centre on Training and Research on Potable Water and Hygiene, National Office of Electricity and Water Supply, Rabat, Morocco
- Professor Abdelhalim Deifalla, WHO Collaborating Centre for Health Professionals' Educational Development, College of Medicine and Medical Sciences, Arabian Gulf University, Manama, Bahrain
- Ms Racha Fadlallah, WHO Collaborating Centre for Evidence-Informed Policy and Practice, Knowledge to Policy Center, Faculty of Health Sciences, American University of Beirut, Beirut, Lebanon
- Dr Farshad Farzadfar, Chair of Noncommunicable Diseases Research Centre, Endocrinology and Metabolism Research Institute, Tehran University of Medical Sciences, Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran
- Dr Tarek Abdul Gawad, WHO Collaborating Centre for Substance Use Prevention and Treatment of Substance Use Disorders, National Rehabilitation Centre, Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates
- Dr Huda Gharaibeh, WHO Collaborating Centre for Nursing Development, Faculty of Nursing, Jordan University of Science and Technology, Irbid, Jordan
- Mrs Seddiqa Ali Abbas Ghuloom, Director, WHO Collaborating Centre for Nursing Development, Nursing Division, College of Health Sciences, University of Bahrain, Manama, Bahrain
- Dr Achraf Grohs, WHO Collaborating Centre for Reproductive Health Research and Training, Mohammed V University, University Hospital Center Ibn Sina, Ministry of Health, Rabat, Morocco
- Professor Usman Hamdani, WHO Collaborating Centre for Mental Health Research, Training and Substance Abuse, Institute of Psychiatry, Rawalpindi General Hospital, Rawalpindi Medical College, Rawalpindi, Pakistan

- Mrs Norr Ghanem Hassan, WHO Collaborating Centre for Treating Tobacco Dependence, Tobacco Control Center, Pulmonary Section, Medical Department, Hamad Medical Corporation, Doha, Qatar
- Dr Gholamreza Heydari, WHO Collaborating Centre on Tobacco Control, National Research Institute of Tuberculosis and Lung Disease, Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran
- Dr Anas Khan, WHO Collaborating Centre for Mass Gatherings Medicine, Director General, Global Center for Mass Gathering Medicine, Ministry of Health, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia
- Dr Mohammad Khoshnevisan, WHO Collaborating Centre for Training and Research in Dental Public Health, Department of Community Oral Health, School of Dentistry, Shahid Beheshti University of Medical Sciences, Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran
- Professor Adil Khoubila, WHO Collaborating Centre for Mental Health Psychiatric Centre, Ibn Rushd University, Casablanca, Morocco
- Dr Mahtab Maghsudlu, WHO Collaborating Centre for Research and Training on Blood Safety, High Institute of Research and Education in Transfusion Medicine, Iranian Blood Transfusion Organization, Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran
- Dr Saeid Mahmoudian, WHO Collaborating Centre for Research and Education on Hearing Loss, Otolaryngology, Head and Neck Research Centre, Iran University of Medical Sciences, Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran
- Professor Seyed Reza Majdzadeh, Professor of Epidemiology, Tehran University of Medical Sciences, Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran
- Dr Seyed Kazem Malakouti, WHO Collaborating Centre for Mental Health, School of Behavioural Sciences and Mental Health, Tehran Institute of Psychiatry, Iran University of Medical Sciences, Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran
- Professor Ghassan Matar, WHO Collaborating Centre for Reference and Research on Bacterial Pathogens, Chairman of Experimental

Pathology, Immunology and Microbiology Department, Faculty of Medicine, American University of Beirut, Beirut, Lebanon

- Dr Kholoud Mattar, Director, WHO Collaborating Centre for Training and Research on Women Health Issues, The National Woman's Health Care Center, Amman, Jordan
- Professor Farhat Moazam, WHO Collaborating Centre for Bioethics, Centre of Biomedical Ethics and Culture, Sindh Institute of Urology and Transplantation, Karachi, Pakistan
- Dr Noushin Mohammadifard, WHO Collaborating Centre for Research and Training in Cardiovascular Diseases Control, Prevention and Rehabilitation for Cardiac Patients, Isfahan Cardiovascular Research Centre, Isfahan, Islamic Republic of Iran
- Dr Wail Nuri Osman Mukhtar, Director, WHO Collaborating Centre for Health Professional Education, Educational Development and Research Centre, Gezira Medical School, University of Gezira, Wad Medani, Sudan
- Dr Amirhossein Jalali Nadoushan, WHO Collaborating Centre in Mental Health, School of Behavioral Sciences and Mental Health, Iran University of Medical Sciences, Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran
- Professor Tirang Neiestani, WHO Collaborating Centre for Research on Nutrition and Food Technology, Faculty of Nutrition and Food Technology, National Nutrition and Food Technology Research Institute, Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran
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- Dr Sareh Safi, WHO Collaborating Centre for the Eye Health and Prevention of Blindness Programme, Ophthalmic Research Centre, Labbafinejad Medical Centre, Shahid Beheshti Medical University, Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran
  - Professor Abdus Samad Shera, WHO Collaborating Centre for Treatment, Education and Research in Diabetes and Diabetic Pregnancies, Diabetic Association of Pakistan, Karachi, Pakistan
  - Dr Houda Sefiani, WHO Collaborating Centre for Strengthening Pharmacovigilance Practices, Rabat, Morocco
  - Dr Sadaf G. Sepanlou, WHO Collaborating Centre for Research on NCDs and Gastrointestinal Cancers, Digestive Diseases Research Institute, Tehran University of Medical Sciences, Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran
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