

DCD Bulletin

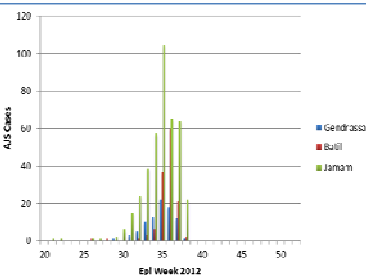
Division of Communicable Disease Control

DCD Bulletin

This quarterly bulletin presents important news, events and announcements from programmes of Division of Communicable Disease Control in the World Health Organization (WHO) Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean. For details, please contact dcdd@emro.who.int inserting "DCD Bulletin" in the subject line.

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Conclusion of the 59th session of Regional Committee; side-events on communicable diseases

The WHO Regional Committee for the Eastern Mediterranean concluded its 59th session in Cairo on 4 October 2012. Following the approval of the Regional Director's annual report for 2011, the Committee requested the Regional Director to take the necessary steps to ensure implementation of the strategic directions proposed for the next five years. Communicable disease prevention and control is one of these strategic directions. During the session of the Committee several issues related to communicable diseases were discussed, including polio eradication and implementation of the International Health Regulations (IHR 2005). Benefiting from the presence of high-level regional delegates, the Division of Communicable Diseases organized the following side-events during the 59th Session.

Launch of the regional initiative towards the elimination of mother-to-child transmission of HIV in the Middle East and North Africa



The Eastern Mediterranean/Middle East North Africa region has responded to the global initiative for the "elimination of new HIV infections among children by 2015 and keeping their mothers alive" by developing a regional framework that provides a common systematic approach to the elimination of mother-to-child transmission of HIV in the Region. The framework was launched in a side-event during the Regional Committee with participation of Dr Margaret Chan, WHO Director General, and Dr Ala Alwan, WHO Regional Director, representatives of UNICEF, the United Nations Population Fund, UNAIDS and Egyptian movie star Hend Sabri. The event aimed at raising awareness and conducting advocacy for political commitment to the regional initiative. The framework has been developed through a broad consultative process which involved regional experts, civil society organizations, international organizations and representatives of people living with HIV.

Member States discuss implementation of the global vaccine action plan

The World Health Assembly during its last session in May 2012 endorsed a resolution on the global vaccine action plan. Benefiting from the presence of ministers of health and other experts, a side meeting on the action plan was organized with the aim of further discussing with Member States of the Region implementation of the global vaccine action plan, translation of the plan into implementation at national level and mobilization of domestic resources.

Global Fund's commitment to the Region discussed

A meeting of delegates from the Global Fund was also held as a side-event. The meeting was attended by ministers of health, head of delegations and partners in the Region. Global Fund representatives shared policy and structural changes happening within the Global Fund Secretariat and how these changes will impact countries of the Region. The Minister of Health of Sudan, while chairing the meeting, also commented on representation of the Eastern Mediterranean on the Board of the Global Fund.

Programme news

Control of Tropical Diseases and Zoonosis

Training on transmission assessment survey held in Egypt



A 3-day training session on transmission assessment survey was held in Cairo. The workshop was attended by participants from national lymphatic filariasis elimination programmes in Egypt and Yemen. The workshop shared information on monitoring mass drug administration, deciding when it is safe to stop mass drug administration, implementing adequate surveillance and, preparing for verification of absence, interruption of transmission through 11 modules.

Monitoring the use of nifurtimox-eflornithine combination therapy in the treatment of second stage gambiense human African trypanosomiasis

Research and Reports in Tropical Medicine (Abstract): Franco et al. (2012)

After inclusion of the nifurtimox-eflornithine combination therapy (NECT) in the Model List of Essential Medicines for the treatment of second-stage gambiense human African trypanosomiasis, WHO, in collaboration with national sleeping sickness control programmes and nongovernmental organizations, set up a pharmacovigilance system to assess the safety and efficacy of NECT during its routine use.

Data were collected for 1735 patients treated with NECT in nine disease-endemic countries during 2010–2011. At least one adverse event was described in 1043 patients (60.1%) and a total of 3060 adverse events were reported. Serious adverse events were reported for 19 patients (1.1% of treated), leading to nine deaths (case fatality rate of 0.5%). The most frequent adverse events were gastrointestinal disorders (vomiting/nausea and abdominal pain), followed by headache, musculoskeletal pains and vertigo. The most frequent serious adverse events and cause of death were convulsions, fever, and coma that were considered as reactive encephalopathy. Two hundred and sixty-two children below 15 years old were treated.

The characteristics of adverse events were similar to adults, but the major adverse events were less frequent in children with only one serious adverse event and no deaths registered in this group. Gastrointestinal problems (vomiting and abdominal pain) were more frequent than in adults, but musculoskeletal pains, vertigo, asthenia, neuropsychiatric troubles (headaches, seizures, tremors, hallucinations, insomnia) were less frequent in children. Patient follow-up after treatment is continuing, but initial data could suggest that NECT is effective as only a low number of relapses have so far been reported (19 cases).

However, additional monitoring is required to assess the efficacy of the treatment, particularly in children. NECT has given satisfactory results of safety in the usual conditions where human African trypanosomiasis patients are managed and it is currently the best option for treatment of second stage of gambiense human African trypanosomiasis.

Surveillance, Forecasting and Response

Hepatitis E outbreak in South Sudan

The Ministry of Health of South Sudan announced an outbreak of hepatitis E in four refugee camps in Upper Nile state. The refugee population numbering over 108 000 crossed over to South Sudan from the neighbouring Sudan as a result of the complex ongoing security situation in the bordering areas. The Ministry reported a total of 384 suspected cases, including 16 deaths from these refugee camps between July and September, initially, as cases of acute jaundice syndrome. Later laboratory tests confirmed hepatitis E virus as the cause of this outbreak. The surveillance, forecasting and response programme is working closely with the WHO country office in South Sudan to provide technical support to the Ministry of Health in responding to the outbreak situation. Details on www.emro.who.int.

Consultative meeting held on introducing seasonal influenza vaccines in the Region

Member States of the WHO Eastern Mediterranean Region do not have policy that supports the introduction of seasonal influenza vaccines in a systematic manner. This is coupled with lack of evidence in the Region that could support the introduction and increased use of influenza vaccines among the general population. To determine the feasibility of introducing seasonal influenza vaccines and developing a regional plan for increased use of seasonal influenza vaccines in the Region, a consultative meeting was organized in Marrakesh, Morocco, in September 2012. The consultation looked at the global and regional situation in implementation of the global action plan for seasonal influenza vaccination. The consultation also considered the low coverage of seasonal influenza vaccine in the Region as a result of scarce policies and lack of national influenza programmes. The meeting concluded with development of an outline of a 5-year plan for the promotion of seasonal influenza vaccination.

Regional consultation on risk communication held in Tunis

A multicounty consultation with focal points of risk communication in the Region was held in Tunis in September. Organized jointly by the WHO Regional Office, in close collaboration with headquarters, the purpose of the consultation was to



Participants of consultative meeting on introducing seasonal influenza vaccines in the Region, September, 2012

Surveillance, forecasting and Response (cont.)

develop minimum requirements of risk communication in the preparedness, response and follow up phases of public health emergencies. The consultation also aimed at developing recommendations on strengthening risk communication capacity of countries during public health emergencies.

World Hepatitis Day celebrated across the Region

Hepatitis: It's closer than you think. Know it. Confront it was the theme of this year's World Hepatitis Day, which was celebrated across the Region on 28 July. World Hepatitis Day provides an opportunity to raise public awareness about viral hepatitis and focus attention on what can effectively be done for its prevention and control. On this occasion, the Regional Director's recorded video message on the Day was broadcast in electronic media in several countries. WHO developed advocacy material which was widely used by countries during special events on this occasion.

International Health Regulations (IHR 2005)

Meetings on legislation and laboratory capacity for implementation of the IHR held in Morocco and Egypt

Two subregional meetings on legislation capacity of the IHR (2005) were held in July 2012 in Marrakesh, Morocco, and in September 2012 in Cairo, Egypt. The meetings aimed to: identify gaps in country legislation capacities; identify appropriate mechanisms and solutions to address these gaps; and propose a set of recommendations. IHR national focal points and legal advisers in the Ministry of Health and Ministry of Justice from most countries of the Region participated in the meetings. The two meetings also discussed the global and regional situation of IHR implementation, legal and legislative aspects, countries' experience in the implementation of the IHR legislation capacity and existing toolkits to assist countries to review and amend their legislation.

The legislation meetings were followed by two subregional meetings on laboratory capacity. The meetings aimed to: identify gaps in laboratory capacities; identify appropriate mechanisms and solutions to address the gaps; and propose a framework to establish a link between IHR national focal points and laboratory specialists. IHR focal points and one laboratory expert from the Ministry of Health from the same countries participated in the two meetings.

International Health Regulations (2005) assessment missions conducted for Libya and Afghanistan

IHR 2005 assessment missions were conducted to assess national core capacities for implementation of the IHR in Libya and Afghanistan. Capacities at points of entry and capacity requirements for four-related hazards were also assessed during the missions in the two countries. Both missions provided technical support to countries in assessing their compliance to the IHR (2005) by 15 June 2012 and in requesting an extension of an additional two years to ensure compliance.

Stop Tuberculosis

Workshop on capacity-building of regional experts on drug-resistant TB held in Egypt

To build a regional roster of experts on drug-resistant TB, the Stop TB programme organized a capacity-building workshop for selected experts from the Region in September in Cairo, Egypt. The workshop training modules included review of WHO guidelines, conducting pre-assessment, monitoring and evaluation missions, developing expansion plans and managing consultancy teams.

Selection Committee of regional Green Light Committee held

To scale up the regional response to MDR-TB challenges, the Stop TB programme is hosting a regional Green Light Committee in the Eastern Mediterranean Region. The Committee will be supported by Stop TB technical staff as secretariat. To select the committee members, a meeting of experts was held in Cairo, Egypt in September. The selection committee reviewed applications of experts for the regional Green Light Committee and developed its recommendations.

Research methodology and proposal development workshop for TB care in Iraq held

A research methodology and proposal development workshop was held in Amman, Jordan, for the national TB control programme and partners in Iraq in June. The objectives of the workshop were to develop protocols and strengthen research capacity of the national programme and its partners. Fifteen participants attended the workshop who were introduced to several modules of research methodology and proposal development. The workshop also helped develop four draft research protocols.



Participants of meeting on legislation and laboratory capacity for IHR (2005) implementation, July, 2012

Stop Tuberculosis (cont.)

Global Fund Board decides principles of new funding model

The Board of the Global Fund to fight AIDS, TB and Malaria met in Geneva in September to approve the broad elements of a new funding model, the Fund's new approach to grant giving. The elements cover two main areas: (a) the manner and extent to which the Global Fund will pre-determine maximum funding amounts to be made available to different countries or groups of countries; and (b) what the process will be for submitting applications and negotiating grant agreements. The Board approved the broad elements in principle. Further discussion concerning the details of the elements will take place over the coming weeks before finalization and approval at the November 2012 Board meeting. Details are available at www.theglobalfund.org. (Source: *GF Observer*).



Participants of meeting of national EPI managers, September, 2012

Vaccine Preventable Diseases

Meeting of national EPI managers held in Egypt

The twenty-seventh meeting of national managers of the Expanded Programme on Immunization (EPI) was held in Sharm El Sheikh in September. The meeting was attended by national EPI managers, national immunization technical advisory groups (NITAG) chairpersons, focal points for vaccine preventable disease and polio programmes from countries, regional technical advisory group members and UNICEF country officers. The meeting was opened by Dr Ala Alwan, WHO Regional Director, who said that annual reporting on the EPI would become a permanent agenda item of the Regional Committee starting in 2013.

The EPI managers' meeting was followed by a meeting of the chairpersons of the NITAGs and an intercountry meeting on measles and rubella elimination. NITAGs discussed progress and constraints facing the EPI and the expected role of NITAG for supporting EPI. The meeting also reviewed 2012 Vaccination Week activities and deliberated on plans for Vaccination Week in 2013. Meeting participants on measles and rubella elimination reviewed progress towards achieving measles and rubella elimination.

Rota vaccine introduced in Yemen's immunization programme

The launching ceremony for introduction of rota vaccine in the national immunization programme was held in August in Sanaa, Yemen. The ceremony was held at the Prime Minister's Office in



the presence of the Minister of Public Health and Population, State Minister, Governor of Sana'a,

WHO Representative, as well as Chief Executive Officer of the GAVI Alliance. Around 909 000 children under one year of age will be targeted by the rota vaccine, which will be given in two doses along with polio, pentavalent and pneumococcal vaccines. At the end of the launching ceremony, the Minister of Public Health and other dignitaries attended a vaccination session and administered vaccine to the children.

Afghanistan successfully conducts first phase of nationwide measles follow-up campaign

The first phase of a planned two-phased national follow-up measles campaign was successfully conducted together with polio in 16 provinces of Afghanistan in July. The campaign targeted children from 9 months to 10 years old. The campaign was successful in vaccinating 93% of the targeted children (against measles) and 91% (one dose of oral poliovirus). However, there are 21 districts with reported less than 80% coverage where there is a need for conducting a mop-up measles campaign. The National Coordination Committee for Measles/Polio is working on preparations for the second phase of a measles/polio campaign in the remaining 18 provinces that will be implemented before the winter season.

Pneumococcal vaccine to be introduced in Pakistan with GAVI support

Pakistan's application for GAVI financial assistance to introduce pneumococcal vaccine (PCV10) was approved in 2010. The support to Pakistan for PCV10 for 2011–2015 is US\$ 681 million while the country will also be co-financing this vaccine with estimated contribution of US\$ 16 million for the same period. Pakistan plans to introduce PCV10 through the EPI in a phased manner starting from the Punjab province and capital territory Islamabad from October 2012. The nationwide introduction of PCV10 is expected to be completed by January 2013.