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Expanded Program on Immunization

Consensus building for a 5-year EPI strategic framework of action

23 May 2017 - In the context of WHO work on a five-year strategy for the expanded program on immunization (EPI) at the MOPH, a meeting was held on 23 May 2017 to discuss the national comprehensive multi-year immunization strategic framework of action, and the way forward to optimize the use of the strategy in the field. The National EPI strategic framework of action was evaluated with WHO support through a thorough situation assessment and consultative process with all EPI stakeholders. The meeting was attended by 22 participants from different organizations namely WHO, MOPH - EPI and surveillance teams, UNICEF, UNHCR, the national certification committee, and the national expert group. A detailed plan of action is expected to be elaborated by the end of 2017.



During the meeting to discuss EPI comprehensive multi-year strategic plan (photo credit: P. Mrad)

Surveillance

Enhancing the MOPH capacity to monitor AFP cases

A- Active surveillance improvement

April / May 2017 - The thorough work of the surveillance department at the MOPH, with support from WHO, is reflected in the Acute Flaccid Paralysis (AFP) indicators that have reached internationally recognized WHO standards for surveillance. In fact, WHO has secured funds to reinforce the human resources capacity of the MOPH whereby 8 additional nurses and 8 drivers are recruited to carry out national active surveillance in selected hospitals. In addition, WHO supported the organization of meetings with the nurses on April 5th and May 22nd, 2017 on capacity building, monitoring and supervision. This has materialized in increased visits of surveillance



MoPH-ESU staff training nurses on active surveillance (photo credit: P. Mrad)

officers to the surveillance sites while conducting onsite training on reporting of AFP cases and other communicable diseases. In addition, training was initiated on the online mobile application that was developed to enhance reporting by private physicians. All these efforts have also led to improving the passive surveillance.

B- Expanding the environmental surveillance for Polio

As a supplement to Acute Flaccid Paralysis (AFP) Surveillance in the National Programme for Poliovirus Eradication and in line with the recommendation of Global Polio Eradication Programme, WHO supported the MOPH to establish an environmental surveillance deemed necessary to detect Wild Polio Virus, Vaccine Derived Polio Virus (VDPV), and Sabin viruses.

MOPH is collecting waste water samples from sewage treatment plants in Ghadir and Jeb Jennine on a monthly basis and sending them to WHO collaborating centres in Jordan to test for polio. Currently, WHO Lebanon is supporting the MOPH in expanding the environmental surveillance plan to collect samples from sewage wastewater collection sites in high risk areas; WHO support includes procurement of equipment and supplies as well as recruitment of ESU staff.



MOPH-ESU staff collecting wastewater from Beirut treatment plant

Assessments

Assessing the usefulness of training activities

A- The case of training at hospital level for mental health emergency care

The major conducive factors for facilitating the use of the mental health guidelines at emergency departments are: (1) being head of the ER; (2) the presence in the ER team of a doctor who attended the training; and (3) that the guidelines were simple to use. These were findings of an assessment conducted by WHO in the second quarter of 2017 to determine the usefulness of training activities for staff at emergency rooms. The assessment also showed that barriers for using the recommended management protocols included: (1) the gap between trained and untrained staff; (2) the high load of psychiatric emergencies at the ER; and (3) attitudinal barriers both at the level of ER staff and the patients' families.

This assessment was a first attempt to evaluate the degree of utilization of the different components of the guidelines as well as identify barriers/conducive factors to their application. The assessment was planned in order to optimize the output of the training and inform decision-making and planning. It was conducted after WHO had supported the training of more than 200 staff from 116 private and public hospitals. The assessment encompassed 5 focus group discussions as well as 15 site visits to selected hospitals.

Main recommendations included training the whole ER teams in selected hospitals that could be considered as referral hospitals and support the role that the nurses play in the continuum of care. In addition, developing "job aids" based on the guidelines in order to facilitate its implementation as well as raising awareness of the general public on the importance of mental health disorders were also raised.

B- The case of training at Primary Health Care level for improvement of quality of care

As part of its normative and capacity building support to the MOPH, WHO provided training workshops during 2014-2016 to staff working in all Primary Healthcare Centres (PHCs) on the following guidelines: (1) the clinical management protocols for the most common health conditions in PHC; (2) the integrated management of childhood illnesses (IMCI); (3) the rational use of medications; (4) the communicable diseases surveillance (CEWARS); and the mental health Gap Action Programme (mhGAP).

A recent evaluation was conducted to assess the degree of utilization of the guidelines as well as challenges in implementation. The evaluation consisted of two questionnaires (for health professionals and for beneficiaries) and a direct observation in 51 PHC centres with a sample of 258 health staff and 93 beneficiaries.

Results show that most health professionals (83.5%) tried to apply as faithfully as possible the guidelines in their daily work. They recognized the added value of the new skills learned and the advantages to their daily practice. The most challenge faced was the turnover of nurses, thus the continued need for capacity building for new nurses. In addition, the high and diversified workload of nurses hinders their continuous participation in training workshops and refresher trainings. Adding to this the lack of financial and human resources for the proper implementation.

As for beneficiaries, the majority (85%) have noticed a significant improvement in the health services provided by the centres, which they qualify as good and very good. Almost all beneficiaries consider having a good experience with both physicians (98.9%) and nurses (97.8%) as well as with administrative staff (97.8%).

In terms of training workshops, recommendations were to develop an annual training plan with frequent training workshops to allow the right selection of staff in order to improve attendance and ensure the whole team participation and involvement in implementation. In addition, it was suggested to provide continuing education credits (i.e. CME for physicians) in order to further incentivize staff to attend. In terms of material, recommendations included production of posters based on the algorithms outlined in the guidelines as well as educational brochures to facilitate patient education in addition to translating the guidelines into 3 languages.

Trainings

WHO continues its support to mental health: a workshop on mental health laws and regulations

18 April 2017 - With support from WHO, the National Mental Health Programme at the MOPH conducted a training workshop on mental health laws and regulations. The workshop was attended by 19 participants from different agencies namely MOPH, UN agencies, as well as international and local NGOs. The workshop had 3 main themes: (1) general discussion of the judicial system in Lebanon; (2) the integration of Human Rights in the Lebanese laws; and (3) laws, regulations, and decrees related to mental health and patients' rights.

This workshop was held in the course of discussions on reviewing the current mental health law. Sections of the proposed amendments were used as real case studies to stimulate feedback.



Excerpt from the laws and regulations workshop

Events

World Health Day 2017 “Depression: Let’s Talk”- Regional Launching ceremony in Lebanon

7 April 2017 - “Let us start today and work together to improve mental health services and care, fight the stigma and encourage people to speak out. WHO stands ready to support, contribute to and collaborate in efforts aiming to improve mental health services and care for all countries in our region, so that people living with mental health disorders are dealt with in positive and inclusive manner”, said WHO Regional Director for the Eastern Mediterranean Dr Mahmoud Fikri in his speech during the launching of the World Health Day.

In fact for this year, the World Health Day celebration for the Eastern Mediterranean Region was launched in Lebanon on Friday 7 April 2017 at the Grand Serail – Beirut under the slogan: “Depression: Let’s Talk” and was attended by around 300 people and broadcasted live on Lebanese televisions as well as on social media (Facebook and Twitter).

The event included a short video on Depression, educational video clips, a documentary on the National Mental Health Programme, as well as a display of the drawings of the Regional art competition. A key aspect of the celebration was the inspiring speech of a young man who lived an experience in mental health and who shared his story and advocated for the rights of patients with mental illness.

Within this Regional celebration, the National campaign was launched under the slogan: “Depression, let’s talk about it to overcome it” “الإكتئاب: خلينا نحكي عتو لنطلع منو”. The official campaign video clip was displayed and the brochures distributed.

During the celebration, awards and certificates of appreciation were distributed to the winners of the WHD 2017 Regional Art Competition whereby 6 students have won from Lebanon.

“In all countries worldwide, mental health is of key importance since there is no health without mental health. For a very long time, mental health was marginalized; Lebanon was fertile ground for depression due to the various problems. Today, we promise not only to work on medical treatment but to treat Lebanon from all the factors that might lead to depression”, concluded H.E. Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Public Health, Mr Ghassan Hasbani.



Speech of the WHO Regional Director for the Eastern Mediterranean Dr Mahmoud Fikri (Photos credit: N. Moundalak)



Speech of H.E. the Minister of Public Health, Mr Ghassan Hasbani



Drawings display



Testimony by Mr Mahmoud Kebbe El Halaby



Distribution of awards to winners

Facebook page: www.facebook.com/wholeb
Twitter account: @WHOLEbanon
YouTube channel: www.youtube/user/WHOLEbanon

