

Current major events

Plan rolled out for assessment of pandemic preparedness for influenza

EMRO has rolled out a plan for assessment of pandemic preparedness for human influenza in the Eastern Mediterranean Region (EMR). As part of this, the national pandemic preparedness plans for human influenza developed by the member states in the Region will be assessed and evaluated through a structured review process.

Keeping in view that such preparedness plans should be multi-sectoral in nature with clear command and control structure, EMRO intends to review these plans within the broader context of member states' emergency preparedness planning process for crisis management using an "All-hazards approach".

After the review, various components of these pandemic preparedness plans will be tested and validated through a tabletop simulation exercise in order to ensure its operability in real-life events. A strategic guidance to support the Member States for developing their pandemic influenza tabletop simulation exercise has also been drafted and currently being finalized by an expert group.

Editorial note

Since the publication of the first pandemic preparedness guidelines in 1999, WHO has advocated that Member States develop preparedness and response plans to mitigate the effects of an influenza pandemic on their population. To date, considerable progress has been achieved to this effect in the EMR.

Preparation and response planning to reduce the impact of any emergency or crisis is a complex process, which requires the coordination and action of multiple players at all operational levels. This process is anticipated to involve a cycle of planning, development, education, practice, testing, evaluation and periodic revision. The revised International Health Regulations (2005) also underlies similar processes for preparedness and response to any public health event of international concern including pandemic influenza. Although WHO is

WHO's Current Influenza Pandemic Phases	
Inter pandemic phase: Animal Influenza outbreaks	
Phase -1	Low risk for humans: No new influenza virus detected in humans
Phase -2	High risk for humans: No human infections but a circulating animal influenza virus poses a risk to humans
Pandemic Alert: New Influenza sub-types in humans	
Phase-3	Human infection (s) with a new subtype: No or only insufficient human-to-human transmission (h2h)
Phase-4	Small cluster (s) with limited h2h but spread is highly localized, suggesting that the virus is not well adapted to humans: Evidence for increased h2h transmission
Phase-5	Larger cluster (s) still localized but virus increasingly better adapted to humans: Significant increase in h2h transmission
Pandemic phase : Widespread spread of human influenza	
Phase-6	Increased and sustained transmission in general population

Recommended actions before, during and after a pandemic

- **Phase-1-3 :** Develop, test and update pandemic influenza preparedness and response plans, including risk communication campaigns, strengthen influenza surveillance system and build appropriate response and surge capacity in health systems
- **Phase-4:** Implement rapid containment measures, scale-up surveillance to detect disease clusters and rapidly notify public and other stakeholders;
- **Phases 5-6:** Coordinate multisectoral resources to minimize impacts, actively monitor progression of pandemic, implement planned interventions to reduce spread;
- **Post-pandemic:** Review operational response based on experiences, provide psychosocial and other services to facilitate early recovery of health systems

currently in the process of updating its guidance (including the pandemic phases) to enable countries to be better prepared for the next pandemic. The Member States need to improve their overall pandemic preparedness for human influenza based on the currently available guidance in order to reduce the social and economic impact of pandemic on its general population.

Clear strategies meeting the national objectives, that are operational and reflect on-the-ground realities, need to be developed for implementation of such preparedness plans and be coherent with international imperatives. Only then the threats of a pandemic influenza can be met collectively, effectively and efficiently. International efforts might have pushed back the spread of avian influenza outbreak this year, but the threats of a global influenza pandemic is real and should not be taken lightly.

Update on outbreaks

in the Eastern Mediterranean Region

Anthrax: in Iraq, Afghanistan, **Dengue:** in Pakistan, Saudi Arabia. **Cholera:** in Iraq; Iran, Somalia, Afghanistan

Current public health events of international concern

[cumulative N° of cases (deaths), CFR %]

Avian influenza

Egypt	[50 (22), 44%]
Indonesia	[137 (112), 81.7%]

AWD/Cholera

Somalia	[412 (6), 1.4%]
Iran	[201 (5), 2.4%]
Afghanistan	[4384* (22), 0.5%]
Iraq	[573 (8), 1.3%]

Dengue fever

Saudi Arabia	[533 (?), ?%]
Pakistan	[10 (8), 80%]#

Hepatitis E

Uganda	[6530 (104), 1.6%]
Sudan	[224 (23), 10.2%]*

Arenavirus (New Virus)

Zambia	[9 (4), 44%]
South Africa	[4 (3), 75%]

Yellow fever

Cote d' Ivoire	[6 (0), 0%]
Guinea	[2 (0), 0%]

Crimean Congo H. Fever

Afghanistan	[24 (4), 16.6%]
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(* = Suspected) CFR = Case-Fatality Rate
? = No data # = Risk assessment ongoing