

Current major events

Vaccination campaign against pandemic influenza kicks off in the EMR

Since Oman launched its nation-wide vaccination campaign against pandemic influenza, eight other Member States in the Region (Kuwait, Qatar, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, UAE, Morocco and Jordan) have launched vaccination campaign against pandemic influenza during the last few weeks. All these countries have selected Hajj pilgrims, health-care workers, pregnant women and other high risk groups for complication from influenza as the first priority groups to receive these vaccines. A massive public awareness campaign has also started in all these countries in connection with the vaccination campaign

Editorial note

In June 2009, the WHO declared the first influenza pandemic in 40 years. Evidence, so far available, suggest that a number of public health interventions like risk communication, good respiratory hygiene and early treatment with antivirals can be effective in responding to this pandemic. However, one of the most effective ways to protect people from the pandemic infection is by vaccinating populations at risk.

Since September 2009, more than 50 countries have implemented immunization campaigns targeting various populations as has been recommended by the SAGE (*Please see the box*). From 21 September to date, tens of million of doses of the pandemic (H1N1) 2009 vaccine have been administered globally. Ten weeks into this worldwide immunization campaign against the pandemic (H1N1) 2009 infection, the review made by the WHO Global Advisory Committee on Vaccine Safety (GACVS) on the safety profile of the pandemic influenza vaccines revealed that the safety data are reassuring. Until now, no unexpected safety concerns have been identified and most of the adverse events that have been reported after the immunization have not been serious.

Countries in the Eastern Mediterranean Region which have started vaccination campaign against pandemic influenza



SAGE Recommendations on pandemic influenza vaccines

- Dose: single dose in adults and adolescents (above 10 years of age). Priority be given to administration of one dose of vaccine if children older than 6 months and younger than 10 years have been identified by the national authorities a priority for early vaccination
- Co-administration: Live attenuated seasonal and live attenuated pandemic vaccine should not be co-administered;
- Priority groups for vaccination: Health-care workers, pregnant women, those aged > 6 months with one of several chronic medical conditions, healthy young adults of 15 to 49 years of age, healthy children, healthy adults of 50 to 64 years of age, and healthy adults of 65 years of age and above

In the Eastern Mediterranean Region, at least 8 countries have already started immunization campaign using pandemic (H1N1) 2009 influenza vaccines. Seven low-income countries in the Region (Afghanistan, Djibouti, Occupied Palestine Territory, Pakistan, Sudan, Somalia, and Yemen) are expected to receive pandemic vaccines from WHO as donations to cover at-least 10% of their total populations. All these countries which have started or about to start immunization campaign need to enhance their reporting mechanisms for adverse events in order to monitor vaccine safety. At the same time, the countries need to scale up social mobilization campaigns to reach out to all those in the priority groups selected for vaccination by the national authorities. A failed campaign will not only drain out precious health resources but at the same time will put the entire country's economic progress at risk.

Update on outbreaks

in the Eastern Mediterranean Region

Pandemic (H1N1) 2009 in all the 22 countries in EMR.

Current public health events of international concern

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

Avian influenza

Egypt	[90 (27), 30%]
Indonesia	[141 (115), 81.6%]
China	[38 (25), 65.8%]
Vietnam	[112(57), 50.9%]
Cambodia	[9 (7), 77.8%]
Global total	447 (263), 58.8%

Kala Azar

S. Sudan	[403 (04), 1%]
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Chemical (Methanol poisoning)

Uganda	[132 (61), 46.2%]
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Pandemic (H1N1) 2009

AFRO	No of deaths: 130
AMRO	No of deaths: At least 6,670
EMRO	Cases: 58,478; Deaths: 891
EURO	No of deaths: At least 2,422
SEARO	No of deaths: 1056
WPRO	No of deaths: 1,249
GLOBAL Total	No of deaths: 12,418

CFR=Case-Fatality Rate