

Current major events

Epidemic alert and verification in the EMR: Summary report 2009

From 01 January to 31 December 2009, a total of 62 public health events were reported in the Eastern Mediterranean Region which required verification by the Member States in accordance with the International Health Regulations (IHR, 2005). The highest proportion of events (13%, 8/62) were reported in May 2009. Of the 62 events reported, 70% (43) were verified by the Member States. Of the 43 events verified by the Member States, 63% (27/43) were discarded and the remaining 37% (16/43) turned out to be a true event of national or international public health concern.

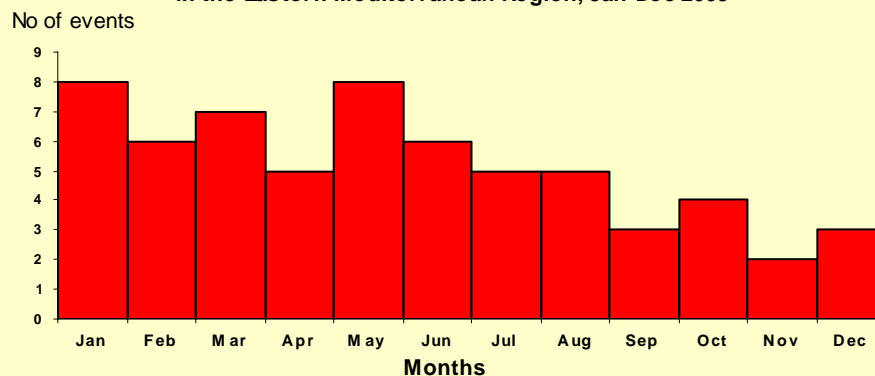
Editorial note

The implementation of International Health Regulations (IHR, 2005) require systematic verification of all rumours or health events that might constitute a global public health risk. WHO usually receives information on rumours from a number of sources including the internet and media. Using an established criteria, these events are assessed by the Regional Office whether or not these constitute threats to public health and then information on such events are sent to the IHR National Focal Points of Member States for assessment and verification.

Since the IHR 2005 came into force in 2007, such alert and verification process has gained importance. It is now the responsibility of the Member State to notify WHO of any event (of potential public health concern) occurring within its territory within a stipulated time-frame either voluntarily or after being requested by WHO for verification of such events. Such rapid assessment of events and sharing of public health information between the Member States and WHO remain critical to prevent cross-border and eventually international spread of disease.

Considering the importance of such verification process, the Member States of the Eastern Mediterranean Region

Number of events requested for verification to Member States in the Eastern Mediterranean Region, Jan-Dec 2009



Reported events by disease or syndrome, 01 Jan-31 Dec 2009 (n=62)

Disease or syndrome	No (%) of events
Cholera or acute watery diarrhoeal syndrome	12
Meningococcal disease	6
Avian influenza A(H5N1)	14
Dengue Fever	4
Acute haemorrhagic fever	7
Legionnaire's disease	8
Acute jaundice syndrome	6
Others (Unknown, poisoning, etc)	5

(EMR) need to establish a very clear and transparent mechanism for rapid assessment, and verification of these reported rumours/events and notify WHO as quickly as possible on the outcome of such assessment and/or field investigation, where warranted. This will not only demonstrate firm commitments of the EMR Member States to their obligations under the IHR, 2005 but will also showcase their surveillance capacity to detect and respond to such events of potential public health concern without any over reaction from the neighbouring countries.

The process of epidemic alert and verification continues to evolve and mature. In the world of global disease surveillance WHO's capacity to rapidly assess information about global threats from epidemics in order to inform the member States about the risks posed by these epidemics also remain critical.

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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Yellow Fever

Cote d' Ivoire	[10 (6), 60%]
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Pandemic (H1N1) 2009

AFRO	No of deaths: 131
AMRO	No of deaths: At least 6,880
EMRO	No of Deaths: 891
EURO	No of deaths: At least 2554
SEARO	No of deaths: 1165
WPRO	No of deaths: 1361
GLOBAL Total	No of deaths: 12,982

CFR=Case-Fatality Rate