World Health Organization

Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean

Current major event

Early Warning System for Disease outbreaks established in Syria

The Ministry of Health in Syria has, recently, established an early warning system for disease outbreaks with support from the WHO Country Office in Syria. A weekly surveillance bulletin is also being produced as part of this early warning system .
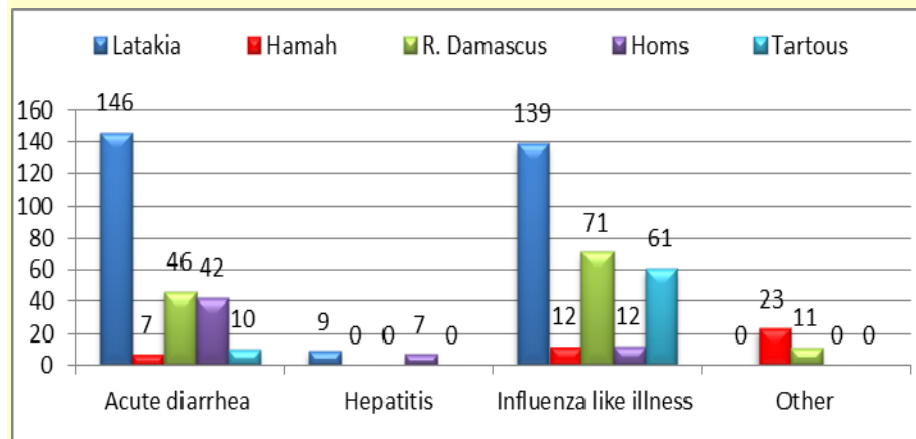
Editorial note

The Early Warning Alert & Response System (EWARS), established by the Ministry of Health has started functioning since 23 September 2012. A total of 104 health centers have been designated as sentinel sites for the EWARS across nine governorates in the country. During the past three weeks, 45% (47/104) of these designated sentinel sites have started reporting surveillance data on a number of reportable health conditions (please see the box) that been included into the EWARS. The reporting timeliness for EWARS is improving over time.

The EWARS for communicable diseases is an efficient surveillance system for epidemic-prone communicable diseases that allows early detection and timely response to epidemics of communicable diseases. The system captures data on case counts of diseases with epidemic potentials and its main goal is early detection of outbreaks through flagging an "unusual event" and triggering an appropriate investigation and response to manage the event.

The system uses syndromic surveillance to report communicable diseases from designated health centres which function as EWARS surveillance site within the country. The surveillance sites, using a simple data collection tool, reports on case counts of selected diseases which are diagnosed by the health care providers on the basis of a case definition. The system analyzes the surveillance data on selected health conditions and provides feedback on a weekly basis for timely and appropriate response. The EWARS

detects an outbreak on the basis of an greed "alert and epidemic threshold" which may vary depending on settings and diseases. The EWARS data can also help in making projections on disease trends that may help in better epidemic preparedness including prepositioning of supplies and drugs at appropriate time and places.

The establishment of the EWARS in Syria followed a risk assessment on the ground by WHO that determined the need for such a system for outbreak detection and response. Training of health care workers was conducted on EWARS and an epidemic response plan has been linked in order to ensure a timely and rapid investigation of any unusual health event. It is expected that during the current situation prevailing in Syria, the EWARS will be a tool not only to detect outbreak but also to reduce mortality and morbidity from epidemic diseases.

A graph showing number and geographic distribution of some common health conditions in Syria for week no 39 (23-29 September 2012)

Reportable diseases included n EWARS in Syria

- Acute diarrhoeal disease
- Acute jaundice syndrome
- Acute flaccid paralysis
- Bacterial meningitis
- Cholera
- Influenza-like illness;
- Measles and Rubella
- Rabies;
- Tuberculosis

Update on outbreaks

in the Eastern Mediterranean Region

Yellow Fever: in Sudan; **WNF :** in Tunisia; **Hepatitis E:** in South Sudan; **Cholera:** in Iraq; and **CCHF:** in Pakistan;

Current public health events of international concern
[cumulative N° of cases (deaths), **CFR %**]

Avian influenza	
China	[43(28), **65.1%**]
Egypt	[168 (60), **35.7%**]
Indonesia	[190 (158), **83.1 %**]
Viet Nam	[123(61), **49.5%**]
Cambodia	[21(19), **90.4%**]
Bangladesh	[6(0), **0%**]
Global total	[607(358), **58.9%**]
Suspected Yellow fever	
Sudan	[374 (110),**29.4%**]#
West Nile Virus	
Tunisia	[59 (9), **15.2 %**]
Crimean-congo haemorrhagic fever	
Pakistan	[55 (14) **25.4.%**]#
Cholera	
Iraq	[3392 (3), **0.08%**] #
Ebola Haemorrhagic Fever	
D.R Congo	[77(36), **46.8%**]

CFR=Case-Fatality Rate; # Suspected cases