

Current major event

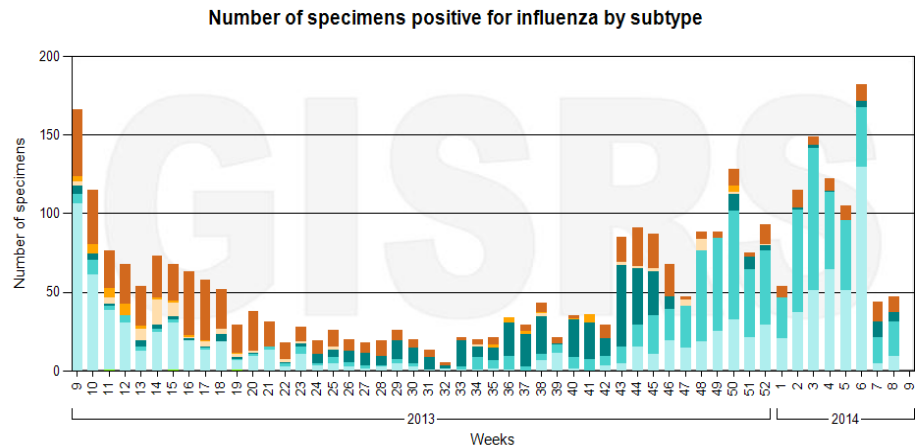
Upsurge of Severe Acute Respiratory Infections in EMR

More countries in the Eastern Mediterranean Region are reporting an un-usual upsurge in the number of severe cases and deaths from SARI/pneumonia admission since the last quarter of December 2013. Egypt, Syria and Pakistan have all reported upsurge in SARI and have requested for technical support from WHO and a team from WHO has just completed a mission to Egypt.

Editorial note

The ongoing upsurge in the cases and deaths due to SARI with confirmed cases of influenza A(H1N1)pdm09 is adding more burden to the many challenges faced by countries in the Eastern Mediterranean Region. Egypt, Syria and Pakistan have all reported significant increase in SARI since December 2014. The main circulating virus were reported to be influenza A(H1N1)pdm09. This pattern has also been observed globally, with USA and countries in North America and Europe witnessing a rise in severe influenza with resulting deaths due to A(H1N1)pdm09.

Egypt is currently experiencing an unusually severe influenza season, primarily associated with influenza A(H1N1)pdm. This appears to have resulted in an increase in cases of atypical pneumonia in several areas of Egypt, notably in the governorate of Dakahlia. About 20 – 25% of the atypical pneumonia cases detected in Dakahlia have laboratory confirmation of influenza A(H1N1)pdm09, all have been negative for MERS-CoV. Syria has also reported outbreaks of SARI associated with laboratory confirmed cases of influenza A(H1N1)pdm09 virus. Most affected governorates are Damascus, Hamah and Sweida. WHO in close collaboration with the health authorities in Syria has undertaken the required response measures. The response work included reinforcing countrywide epidemiological surveillance and investigation for fatalities and potential clusters, laboratory strengthening for the detection of etio-



logical agents. Response measures also include reinforcing case management in all governmental and private hospitals based on the updated protocol. The required vaccines and medicines have been made available by WHO while overseeing that the implementation of WHO policy recommendations for protecting vulnerable high risk groups against severe influenza-associated disease and death.

Social mobilization and health education have already started to promote prevention and control of the disease. The affected communities have been made aware and sensitized to seek early treatment to curtail the number of deaths.

Pakistan has witnessed an upsurge in influenza this season and has requested for antiviral drugs. WHO is in the process of sending the requested amount from its remaining stock in Dubai.

The ongoing upsurge in severe cases of influenza A(H1N1)pdm09 infections during the last two influenza seasons should act as a reminder to countries in the EMR to the threats posed by influenza and its consequences among vulnerable groups like pregnant women, children and people with co-morbidities. This groups can benefit from targeted vaccination with seasonal influenza vaccines before the influenza season. Member states are advised to be better prepared in the coming years especially in the area of enhanced SARI and influenza surveillance during the seasons.

Update on outbreaks

in the Eastern Mediterranean Region

Novel Coronavirus in Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, UAE, Kuwait, Tunisia & Oman

Current public health events of international concern

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

Avian Influenza A (H5N1)

Egypt	[173 (63), 36.4%]
Indonesia	[195 (163), 83.6 %]
Viet Nam	[125 (62), 49.6%]
Cambodia	[47 (33), 70.2%]
Global total	[650 (386), 59.4%]

Novel Coronavirus (MERS-CoV)

Saudi Arabia	[147 (59), 40.1%]
Jordan	[4 (3), 75 %]
Oman	[3 (3), 100%]
UAE	[13 (6), 46.1%]
Kuwait	[2 (0), 0%]
Tunisia	[1 (0), 0%]
Qatar	[10 (6), 60%]

Yellow fever

Sudan	[49 (15), 32%]
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Crimean-Congo Haemorrhagic Fever

Pakistan	[100 (20), 20%]
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Wild poliovirus

Syria	[25 (0)]
Somalia	[194 (0)]

CFR=Case-Fatality Rate; # Suspected cases