

Current major event

Existed influenza surveillance systems buttress the COVID-19 surveillance

The statement on the fourth meeting of the International Health Regulations (2005) Emergency Committee regarding the outbreak of coronavirus disease (COVID-19) on 1 August 2020 advised WHO to support State Parties in preparing for and responding to concurrent outbreaks, such as seasonal influenza. The statement further recommends State Parties to share timely information and data with WHO on COVID-19 epidemiology and severity, response measures, and on concurrent disease outbreaks through platforms such as the Global Influenza Surveillance and Response System (GISRS).

Editorial note

Surveillance is the practice of tracking, monitoring and measuring the activity, burden and trend of a disease's impact on a community.

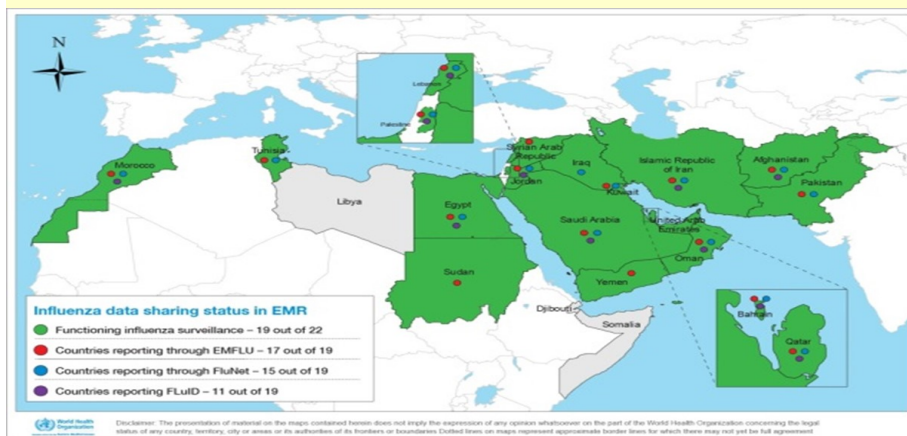
There are many common objectives for influenza and COVID-19 surveillance as both aim to monitor the timing, geographic spread, intensity of transmission and severity over time, inform hospital preparedness and appropriate mitigation measures and to assess the impact of public health interventions.

In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, GISRS, regional influenza networks, and national influenza surveillance systems should prepare for the co-circulation of influenza and SARS-CoV-2 viruses in the upcoming and subsequent influenza seasons and for the possible emergence of influenza viruses of pandemic potential.

WHO's Interim Guidance of 26 May 2020 on Preparing GISRS for the upcoming influenza seasons during the COVID-19 pandemic – practical considerations (<https://apps.who.int/iris/handle/10665/332198>) summarizes operational considerations to continue monitoring of the persistent influenza threat and maintain influenza surveillance while responding to the current COVID-19 pandemic.

The influenza threat remains persistent and the continuous surveillance, monitoring, and timely assessment of associated risks of seasonal, zoonotic, and pandemic influenza as specified in the WHO Terms of Reference of GISRS must continue. Leverage of GISRS and associated surveillance systems for COVID-19 sentinel surveillance is advised for the current COVID-19 response.

Influenza Surveillance in Eastern Mediterranean Region



COVID-19: Practical considerations for sentinel sites, NICs and influenza surveillance systems

- Analyze gaps and needs and define adapted and realistic surveillance deliverables
- Continue influenza surveillance and shipping viruses to WHO CCs
- Secure and share quality influenza surveillance specimens – at least 150 weekly per NIC
- Conduct periodic review and analysis for achieving the objectives for both influenza and COVID-19 surveillance and define essential and realistic surveillance deliverables.
- Reporting is essential and should not be neglected. COVID-19 sentinel surveillance data reporting is included in FluNet.
- Maintain ILI/SARI surveillance to understand co-circulation of influenza and COVID-19
- Forecast demand, anticipate shortages and logistics challenges

Global Influenza Surveillance and Response System (GISRS) that was established by WHA 2011 is currently operational in 125 countries with 155 contributing institutions, including 146 National Influenza Centres (NICs). In the Eastern Mediterranean Region (EMR), 18 NIC secured the timely detection and confirmation of SARS-CoV-2 (see the box). In EMR, 19 out of 22 countries have functioning influenza surveillance system (see the map). GISRS is coordinated by the WHO Global Influenza Program (GIP), and functions under WHO terms of reference that ensure it is voluntary, supported by member states through an official designation and recognition process, quality assured, timely, and functions all year round.

Sentinel surveillance for influenza combines epidemiological and virologic surveillance with objectives to monitor influenza illness activity, virus circulation, characterize burden, severity of disease, determine risk factors for severe disease, detect unusual activity. Sentinel sites that contribute as sources of viruses for the GISRS (virological surveillance) are health care facilities with SARI/Pneumonia/ICU, as well as ARI/ILI in primary care facilities.

Update on outbreaks

in the Eastern Mediterranean Region

COVID-19 in 22 EMR countries

Current public health events of concern

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

Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19): 2019-2020

Afghanistan	[40 200 (1492), 3.7%]
Bahrain	[77 571 (293), 0.4%]
Djibouti	[5452 (61), 1.1%]
Egypt	[105 297 (6109), 5.8%]
Iran (Islamic Republic of)	[526 490 (30 123), 5.7%]
Iraq	[423 524 (10 198), 2.4%]
Jordan	[36 053 (330), 0.9%]
Kuwait	[115 483 (694), 0.6%]
Lebanon	[60 947 (517), 0.8%]
Libya	[48 790 (725), 1.5%]
Morocco	[170 911 (2878), 1.7%]
occupied Palestinian territory (oPt)	[58 150 (472), 0.8%]
Oman	[108 296 (1071), 1%]
Pakistan	[323 019 (6654), 2.1%]
Qatar	[129 227 (223), 0.2%]
Saudi Arabia	[341 854 (5156), 1.5%]
Somalia	[3864 (99), 2.6%]
Sudan	[13 711 (836), 6.1%]
Syrian Arab Republic	[5033 (245), 4.9%]
Tunisia	[40 542 (626), 1.5%]
United Arab Emirates	[114 387 (459), 0.4%]
Yemen	[2059 (597), 29%]