

**REGIONAL COMMITTEE FOR THE
EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN
Seventieth Session
Cairo, Egypt, 9–12 October 2023**

October 2023

**DEVELOPING AND IMPLEMENTING NATIONAL PLANS FOR THE DEVELOPMENT
AND ADAPTATION OF CLINICAL PRACTICE AND PUBLIC HEALTH GUIDELINES**

Objectives of the event

On 9 October 2023, a technical discussion will be held on developing and implementing national plans for the development and adaptation of clinical practice and public health guidelines.

The objectives of the event are to:

- raise awareness of Member States on the role and importance of national guideline development and adaptation programmes for evidence-informed decision-making;
- highlight the need to establish or strengthen national guideline development and adaptation programmes, as a key step toward universal health coverage via better use of resources and improved health outcomes;
- discuss WHO strategies for supporting countries in the development and adaptation of evidence-based clinical practice and public health guidelines.

Background

Clinical practice guidelines and public health guidelines are knowledge products developed to improve evidence-informed decision-making at the clinical or public health level. The importance of guidelines in transforming knowledge into action during health care delivery is paramount. High-quality guidelines must emerge from unbiased and transparent processes including systematic reviews, critical appraisals of existing evidence, and consideration of local needs and contexts in all recommendations. Such guidelines can aid the provision of more effective and equitable clinical and public health services to the population as a key step toward universal health coverage. However, developing and adapting high-quality guidelines requires substantial time and resources.

Clearly, a lack of evidence-based guidelines can lead to uncertainties and variations in practice, and to deterioration in service quality and efficiency of service delivery at all resource levels. WHO guidelines cover a wide range of public health, health system and clinical topics and are developed using robust processes and methods to ensure they are of high-quality and contain credible recommendations for countries. However, due to the variety of health systems and contexts in countries and territories of the Eastern Mediterranean Region, the uptake of WHO guidelines remains a challenge.

Resolution EM/RC66/R.5 (2019) endorsed a framework for enhancing institutional capacity for evidence-informed policy-making in different national contexts. A regional action plan for the implementation of the framework was developed in 2021, which includes strategies and objectives to support the development of the technical capacity of Member States to adapt or develop guidelines.¹ Globally, WHO is investing in innovative approaches in the development and delivery of guidelines, such as living guidelines and smart guidelines. These approaches may transform the guideline adaptation and implementation process to preserve fidelity and accelerate uptake. WHO is working in the Region to provide technical support in enhancing national processes for guideline development and adaptation as well as capacity-building for key

¹ Regional action plan for the implementation of the framework for action to improve national institutional capacity for the use of evidence in health policy-making in the Eastern Mediterranean Region. Cairo: WHO Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean; 2021 (<https://applications.emro.who.int/docs/9789290229124-eng.pdf>).

stakeholders. The results of the work will also be used to improve WHO recommendations to Member States of the Region and provide opportunities for closer collaborations with countries, as required.

Challenges in the Region

Most Member States of the Eastern Mediterranean Region lack a national plan for the development or adaptation of guidelines. In addition, the uptake and implementation of WHO guidelines remains suboptimal. Guidelines cannot necessarily be adopted “as is” across settings, given the contextual and cultural differences across the Region, which highlights the need for adaptation of guidelines at the country level. A few countries (such as Egypt, Islamic Republic of Iran, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Tunisia and United Arab Emirates) have undertaken initiatives for guideline adaptation and development to some degree. However, no countries in the Region have established an integrated programme for guideline adaptation and development at the national level. At least three countries have established national guidelines’ centres but, even in these cases, further improvement of processes and plans is warranted. The majority of countries have not adequately invested in the use of guidelines as a systematic tool for guiding clinical and public health decisions and enhancing service delivery.

Expected outcomes

- Awareness raised among Member States of the role and importance of national guideline development and adaptation programmes for evidence-informed decision-making.
- Highlighting the need to establish or strengthen national guideline development and adaptation programmes, as a key step toward universal health coverage via better use of resources and improving health outcomes.
- Discussion of WHO strategies for supporting countries in the development and adaptation of evidence-based clinical practice and public health guidelines.