



Global Health  
Development



EMPHNET  
The Eastern Mediterranean  
Public Health Network

► GHD | EMPHNET: working  
together for better health



# GHD/EMPHNET Newsletter

Issue No. 37

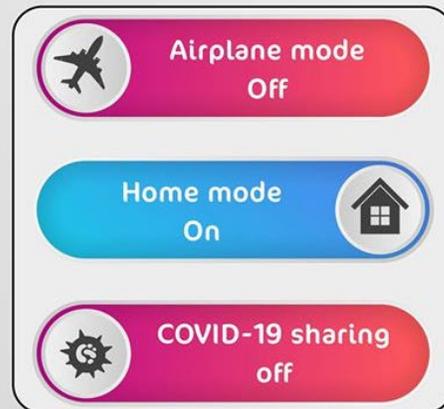
January - March 2020

**COVID-19 Special Issue**

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**Keep yourself and your  
loved ones safe from  
COVID-19**

**Stay home as much as  
possible, connect with  
people through your  
phone**



**Let's stop the spread of Covid-19**

**#StopTheSpread**

## **GHD/EMPHNET Joins Global Community in the Fight Against COVID-19**

### **Work Is in Full Swing at the Public Health Emergency Management Center**

As early as COVID-19 began to threaten the Eastern Mediterranean Region (EMR), GHD/EMPHNET employed its scientific expertise to contribute to elevating the level of country alert and preparedness in the region. GHD/EMPHNET's support intensified when with the World Health Organization (WHO) declared COVID-19 a pandemic in late January 2020.

### ***Technical and Logistic Support***

Through its Public Health Emergency Management Center (PHEMC), GHD/EMPHNET has been providing technical support to its partners, namely in the development of guidelines, promotion material, and case studies to educate public health professionals-and the public at large-on COVID-19. Coupled with this support is the provision of needed logistic assistance in GHD/EMPHNET's countries of operation.

### ***Online Training***

PHEMC is also heavily engaged in contributing to online training centered around COVID-19 response, targeting health professionals, and graduates and residents of Field Epidemiology Training Programs (FETPs) in the EMR. For instance, PHEMC has been supporting FETPs in the provision of training on contact tracing, rapid response, risk communication, infection control, and the development of training modalities tailored to COVID-19. PHEMC is also taking an active role in facilitating webinars at the regional level, particularly in relation to COVID-19 prevention in professional settings, regional NGO operational readiness, and rapid preparedness to contain COVID-19.

### ***Networking with Partners and Stakeholders***

Synergized and multi-sectoral action is a must during this pandemic. With this belief in mind,

PHEMC is devoting time to maintaining regular contact with partners in the EMR and in the international community as part of the organization's engagement in coordinated response efforts in the region and globally. PHEMC has been in regular calls and meetings with FETPs; FETP networks; the Global Outbreak Alert and Response Network (GOARN); the Africa CDC Task Force for Novel Coronavirus (AfCOR); the WASH Cluster; UNICEF; and the WHO-EMRO Regional Crisis Management and Risk Communication and Community Engagement units.

Over the past three months, GHD/EMPHNET's PHEMC has been utilized to be a force in supporting regional efforts in COVID-19 response. This an effort that will continue to exert until the fight against this disease ends.

## FETPs in the Region: Heroic Fighters at the COVID-19 Frontline



We send a big salute to our Field Epidemiology Training Programs' (FETPs) fighters who have shown their indispensable value to the region's health system in responding to an unprecedented pandemic.

Their key role was seen in supporting national surveillance functions. Not only are FETPs actively engaged in setting up and running of the event and case-based surveillance, but they are also involved in managing surveillance data, analysis and reporting of cases, development, and distribution of a standard case definition for the COVID-19.

FETP residents in many countries have been working with hospitals to develop isolation and infection control protocols, and they are assisting in collecting samples and sending them to for laboratory testing to confirm COVID-19 suspected cases.

As COVID-19 front-liners, FETPs are also participating in screening passengers at different Points of Entries (POEs). Their roles range from running the thermal scanners installed at entry points, interviewing arrivals, filling-in surveillance forms and contact the

arrivals in the follow up period.

FETPs have significantly contributed to the design and development of health education messages and promotional materials. Furthermore, FETPs in the entire region are directly and significantly involved in developing training materials and conducting training events for various health professionals. Those trainings include Rapid Response Teams (RRT), POEs, contact tracing, lab and sample management, infection control, and cases management.

As we speak, FETP advisors, graduates, and residents, are hard at work, risking their lives to protect public health in the region and the globe.

Thank you our FETP heroes!

## GHD/EMPHNET Utilizes Online Platforms for COVID-

19



The screenshot shows a video conference interface. In the top left corner is the logo for EMPHNET, The Eastern Mediterranean Public Health Network. There are two video feeds. The left feed shows a woman wearing a pink headscarf and glasses. The right feed shows a woman with glasses and a headset. Below each video feed is a blue banner with white text in Arabic. The left banner identifies the woman as a consultant in general public health at the Sudanese Medical Council. The right banner identifies her as the director of the communication and awareness network in the Eastern Mediterranean region.

**EMPHNET**  
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استشارية الصحة العامة وطب المجتمع في المجلس  
الطبي السوداني  
د. ندى أحمد

مديرة دائرة الوقاية والتوعية المجتمعية في الشبكة الشرق اوسطية  
للصحة المجتمعية  
د. هنا طه

### Harnessing Social Media for Health Promotion

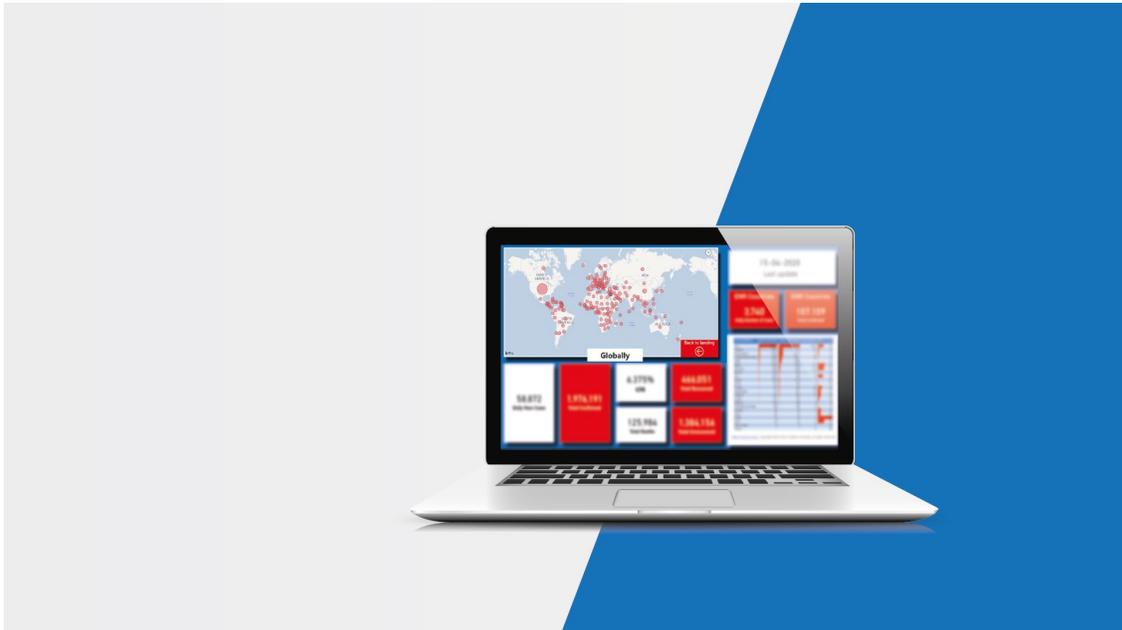
Utilizing its strong presence on social media platforms, GHD/EMPHNET has been disseminating daily health awareness messages, providing COVID-19 updates from the region, and highlighting the region's impressive work despite instability and other constraints. One tool that has been proven popular is our weekly live Q&A Facebook sessions. This one-hour long interaction among public health experts and audiences from the region addresses public questions related COVID-19 treatment options, vaccine research, mental health in lockdowns, among other health concerns. This session is used mainly to debunk myths, battle rumors, and empower the public against COVID-19.

## Health Professionals Use EpiShares for Regional COVID-19 Updates

Through GHD/EMPHNET's powered social media network "EpiShares," GHD/EMPHNET is creating create awareness on various issues relevant to COVID-19. The page "Coronavirus Updates" posts regular updates a private group titled "FETP Professionals" serves as a space for FETP directors, advisors, and coordinators to discuss key issues of concern in this regard.

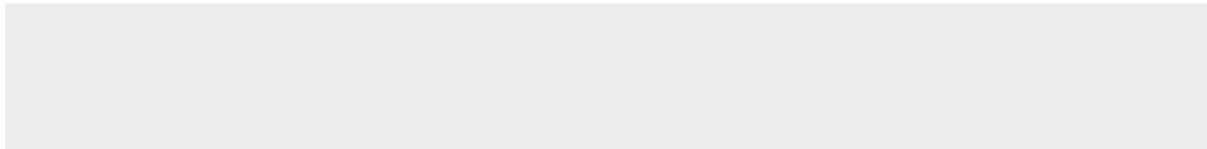
## Our Experts in Media Coverage for COVID-19

In interviews and news reports, GHD/EMPHNET's experts have appeared on numerous regional and national TV channels to convey important messages to viewers on various issues relevant to COVID-19: prevention, current research into vaccines, national policies to contain the pandemic, COVID-19 and mental health more. In the press, our experts have also contributed articles, focusing on highlighting progress made by the countries and action needed to accelerate this progress.



## COVID-19 Dashboard Is Now Available on Our Website

Using statistics provided by the Johns Hopkins University, GHD/EMPHNET has now created a COVID-19 dashboard that provides updates on number of cases, recoveries, and deaths. While the dashboard provides global data, it also has a special section for EMR countries. To view the dashboard, visit our website at [www.emphnet.net](http://www.emphnet.net).





## **GHD/EMPHNET Team is Staying Safe and Active**

In light of the lockdowns and quarantines across the region, the GHD/EMPHNET team has been using the online world to conduct business. While some team members are joining the frontline to support national and regional efforts, there are also team members who are working from home. They are making the best use of technology to hold internal and external meetings, to facilitate training sessions, to take part in distance learning, and more.

GHD/EMPHNET believes that its human and material resources can be put to use to support national and regional efforts in the fight against COVID-19. While we may be at home, but we ensure to contribute to national, regional, and international response efforts





## Mental Health of Health Workers: A Rising Concern During COVID-19

COVID-19 has introduced many challenges around the world by transforming everything about our daily lives. A serious concern stands out: our mental health. The pandemic has created a widespread and persistent mental health fall-out that elevated fear of catching or dying of the virus. Those already experiencing anxiety, depression, and other forms of chronic mental illness are now faced with psychological burdens of isolation. The lockdown also has its toll on those with no history of mental or psychological illness.

Health workers are also vulnerable to suffer from great psychological burden and other health-related problems due to pressure of dealing with the disease and strict precarious positions that affected their free movement. Health care professionals are at risk of being exposed to psychological distress, such as role conflict, emotional disturbance, concern over medical errors, and the risk of experiencing verbal or physical abuse at the hands of patients. These pressure components should prompt burnout, anxiety disorders, traumatic experiences, insomnia, or other mental issues.

In Wuhan, China, a study assesses anxiety, depression, insomnia, and PTSD as experienced by health workers. The study found that effect was greater in nurses, women, those directly caring for virus patients. Researchers conducted a survey of 1257 healthcare workers from 34 hospitals. Among them, there were high rates of depression (50%), anxiety (45%), insomnia (34%), and distress (72%).

Protecting health care workers is an important component of public health measures for addressing the COVID-19 pandemic. In times of crisis people all around the world found creative ways to thank front-line workers battling COVID-19. People have responded to their health-care workers by applauding and showing gratitude through their balconies, and rooftops and also play

music, to sing to one another, and to lift one another's spirits. Humanity has shown us hope in how we are trying to find creative ways to support each other and we have shown hope by engaging with each other in an emphatic way.

Health workers need our continuous support: their mental, and physical, health is of great importance. Not are they only our brothers and sisters in humanity, but they are also heroes risking their own lives to protect ours.



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