



## Newsletter Issue No. 36

### Oct - Dec 2019

## Editor's Letter

We are pleased to share with you the thirty-sixth issue of GHD/ EMPHNET's quarterly newsletter. This issue covers our activities for the first quarter of this year, from October until December 2019.

Our **Feature Story** section is dedicated to the Jordan Public Health Forum which was recently established to foster dialogue and engage stakeholders across Jordan to address prevailing national public health trends and challenges.

In the newsletter's **Person of the Issue**, we highlight the achievements of Dr. Aamer Ikram, the Executive Director of the National Health Institute Islamabad. We focus on his commendable contributions to the field at the local, regional, and international levels.

A section of this newsletter also discusses a selection of our major activities in the past quarter, and we conclude the issue with an informative article on antimicrobial resistance as a growing public health threat in the Eastern Mediterranean Region.

With our diverse selection of topics, we hope you enjoy reading our newsletter and find interesting news relevant to public health both regionally and globally.

The Newsletter Editorial Team

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## Jordan Public Health Forum Established to Serve as a Collaborative Advocacy Platform

In late 2019, the Jordan Public Health Forum (JPHF) established a platform to foster dialogue and engage stakeholders across Jordan to address prevailing national public health trends and challenges. The first of its kind in Jordan, the JPHF will create a space where experts, leading figures, and decision makers from multiple interrelated sectors to engage in dialogue, produce publications, and perform other activities towards finding innovative responses to public health matters.

From the public health sector, the Forum's members will represent health institutions, advocacy groups, decision makers, public health experts, private sector, academia, government and non-governmental entities. To create a needed intersectoral sphere, the Forum also bridges links between the health system with other involved sectors to build a closer intersectoral connections.

With its intellectual and inclusive nature, the JPHF will lead to better insights and actionable recommendations for policy and decision makers. Furthermore, the Forum's publications would vastly enhance the knowledge and information available for reference to policy makers from within the health sector and beyond.

In offering an exclusive platform for diverse professionals and stakeholders across Jordan, the JPHF is expected to address public health challenges and opportunities to achieve a better and more sustainable future in Jordan. Apart from raising awareness and disseminating knowledge on health challenges in Jordan, promoting intersectoral collaboration, and supporting publications to inform policy makers; the JPHF has a set of other important objectives. These include improving public access to knowledge in an effort to create wider stakeholder involvement and reduced public misinformation. Furthermore, the Forum also aims to create discussions for advancing progress and contributing to Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG3.

In preparation for the launch of the Jordan Public Health Forum (JPHF), EMPHNET held an introductory meeting for the Forum's Advisory Committee at EMPHNET's premises in Amman on December 8, 2019.

After an introduction on the Forum's rationale, participants engaged in a discussion on the Forum's activities for the upcoming year, the timeline of those activities, and preparations for the Forum's launch. Participants highlighted the significance of the Forum in bridging the health system with other involved sectors to build closer multi-sectoral connections and collaboration. Participants also emphasized JPHF's role in creating insights and actionable recommendations for policy and decision makers.

The JPHF was initiated by EMPHNET as part of its efforts to promote collaborative and multi-sectoral approaches towards sustainable public health development.

- The Jordan Public Health Forum Advisory Committee Members:
- Dr. Sawsan Al Majali: Senator, Jordanian Senate
- Dr. Raeda Qutob: Professor at the University of Jordan
- His Excellency Dr. Zaid Hamzeh: Former Minister of Health
- His Excellency Dr. Saad Kharabsheh: Former Minister of Health
- Dr. Mohammad Al Tarawneh: Secretary General at the High Health Council
- Dr. Lail Al Fayez: Former Secretary General of the Ministry of Health
- Dr. Taher Abu Al-Samen: Former Secretary General of the High Health Council
- Prof. Zaid Eyadat: Director of the Center for Strategic Studies
- Ms. Nisreen Qatamish: Director General of the King Hussein Cancer Foundation
- Dr. Nisreen Al Hmoud: Director of the Biosafety and Biosecurity Center at the Royal Scientific Society
- Dr. Ibrahim Aqel: Director of the Institute for Family Health/King Hussein Foundation
- Dr. Ali Al Sa'ad: Director of Al Maqased Hospital
- Dr. Ghada Al Kayyali: Health Systems Strengthening Officer at the World Health Organization Jordan Country Office
- Dr. Mousa Al Ajlouni: Senior Independent Healthcare Management Consultant
- Prof. Yousef Al Khader: Senior Advisor at EMPHNET







## Person of the Issue

### Dr. Aamer Ikram

Dr. Aamer Ikram from Pakistan is a prominent public health figure who is renowned for his vast experience and knowledge at the local, regional, and international levels. Currently, he serves as the Executive Director of the National Institute of Health (NIH) Pakistan. Under his leadership, the NIH witnessed impressive achievements. These include the establishment of an all hazards Emergency Operation Center at the Field Epidemiology and Disease Surveillance Division (FEDSD) and the establishment of the Patient Safety Institute. Recently, the NIH also celebrated the accreditation of FELTP Pakistan by TEPHINET, through which the program joined 16 countries (out of 70 worldwide) which have been accredited thus far. Other achievements are the launch of policies on health laboratory and biosafety and biosecurity and the operationalization of the first ever zoonotic/ vector borne laboratory.

These contributions are among the major accomplishments which Dr. Ikram has made throughout the course of his career, in both administration and academia, in his home country Pakistan. The most notable ones include the establishment of the National University of Medical Sciences and the Quetta Institute of Medical Sciences.

Among the numerous honors Dr. Ikram received were the Sitara-e-Imtiaz (Military) National Award in 2014 and the IFBA Biosafety Heroes Award from the International Federation of Biosafety Association in 2011. Dr. Ikram serves on the editorial board of multiple international, regional, and local publications, and he has written over 250 publications.

Dr. Ikram's interests span a number of interrelated areas and these include Global Health, One Health, International Health Regulations, Global Health Security Agenda; Integrated Disease Surveillance Response; Biosafety and Biosecurity; Hospital Infection Control; Environmental Microbiology; Emerging Infections and Antimicrobial Resistance; and Medical Education.

In 1987, Dr. Ikram graduated from the Army Medical College. In 1990, he obtained a Diploma in Pathology, and he qualified MCPS in Clinical Pathology a year later. He also completed a fellowship in Clinical Microbiology in 1998, and he did clinical training in the UK in 2005. Dr. Ikram completed his PhD in Microbiology in 2014. Dr. Ikram gained various qualifications from renowned institutions: Harvard, Princeton, Public Health England, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the World Bank, and many others.





## GHD : EMPHNET NEWS

### Disease Control

#### GHD/EMPHNET Supports Strengthened Biorisk Management for Public and Animal Health Laboratories in Yemen

GHD/EMPHNET conducted a training workshop between October 13 and 17, 2019, in Amman and Irbid in Jordan on biorisk management for twenty-two laboratory professionals from Yemen. This workshop was conducted in close coordination with the Yemen ministries of health and agriculture and the Princess Haya Biotechnology Center of Jordan. The training focused on biorisk management concepts and best practices, including risk assessment as well as risk mitigation and performance.

The training's sessions were facilitated by experts from both Jordan and Yemen and were aimed to assist public health and veterinary laboratory professionals in developing a biorisk management plan. [Read more.](#)

#### EMPHNET and Partners Explore Establishing a Laboratory Network in Jordan

In Jordan, the Los Alamos National Laboratory (LANL), supported by the Defense Threat Reduction Agency (DTRA) of the United States of America, is conducting a series of training and coordination workshops to support the establishment of a national laboratory network based on the One Health approach. These workshops aim to enhance collaboration and coordination among human health and animal health institutions in Jordan, focusing on promoting exchange of diagnostic capabilities to inform future collaboration in areas of surveillance, research, and response to infectious diseases and biothreats. [Read more.](#)







## GHD : EMPHNET NEWS

### Polio Eradication and Routine Immunization

#### **GHD/EMPHNET and Partners in Iraq Hold Planning Meeting to Coordinate Activities in Support of Polio Eradication and Routine Immunization**

In collaboration with GHD/EMPHNET, the Iraq Ministry of Health held a meeting with partners and stakeholders to discuss activities related to polio eradication and routine immunization for the upcoming year. Participants were from the Ministry of Health, the World Health Organization country office, UNICEF country office, and senior Expanded Program on Immunization (EPI) staff. The meeting introduced GHD/EMPHNET supported activities in Iraq. Discussions took place on the timeline for activity implementation and coordination with partners in activity planning and implementation.

#### **EMPHNET Marks Breast Cancer Awareness Month in Jordan**

In October 2019, EMPHNET collaborated with the King Hussein Cancer Foundation and Center, the Jordan Breast Cancer Program, and local associations on a series of health awareness session during Breast Cancer Awareness Month.







## GHD : EMPHNET NEWS

### Partnerships

#### Libya National Center for Disease Control and GHD/EMPHNET Explore Collaboration Opportunities

A delegation from National Center for Disease Control (NCDC) in Libya headed by Dr. Badereddin Annajar the NCDC Director General visited GHD/EMPHNET between October 19 and 20, 2019. During this meeting, both parties explored potential areas for collaboration towards serving the public health priorities of Libya. Discussions focused on areas of field epidemiology, biorisk management, emergency management, immunization, and risk communication.

[Read more.](#)



#### GHD/EMPHNET and WHO Regional Center for Environmental Health Action Explore Collaboration Opportunities

On October 28, 2019, GHD/EMPHNET and the WHO Regional Centre for Environmental Health Action (CEHA) held a meeting to explore areas of potential collaboration related to pressing environmental health issues in the Eastern Mediterranean Region (EMR). The meeting took place at GHD/EMPHNET's headquarters in Amman, Jordan.

[Read more.](#)

## **EMPHNET To Improve Blood Pressure Control in Jordan**

EMPHNET has been awarded a highly competitive, two-year grant to address the burden of high blood pressure in Jordan. EMPHNET will launch and evaluate a blood pressure control program in 20 health care centers in Jordan, where nearly 1 in 3 adults has high blood pressure. The grant program part of the LINKS platform that connects people working to improve cardiovascular health around the world, is funded by Resolve to Save Lives, an initiative of Vital Strategies, and managed by Resolve to Save Lives, along with the World Health Organization and the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention through the CDC Foundation. [Read more.](#)

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## **EMPHNET Launches Project to Offer Family Planning Services to Vulnerable Communities**

EMPHNET was recently awarded a three-year grant to encourage the adoption of quality family planning services among vulnerable host communities and Syrian refugees living in Lebanon and Jordan. The award was granted by the International Development Research Center Canada. The project aims to develop and evaluate the feasibility and preliminary effectiveness of an intervention aimed to encourage the use of contraceptives through couples' counseling and the use of digital technologies. By promoting evidence-based family planning practices and birth control, the project is expected to contribute to the improvement of fragile health systems which is already burdened by a major influx of refugees. [Read more.](#)



## Public Health Issue in Focus

# Antimicrobial Resistance: A Growing Public Threat in the Region

Every year, countries worldwide mark the World Antibiotic Awareness Week between November 18 and 24. In 2019, the week was celebrated under the theme “The future of antibiotics depends on us all,” targeting everyone from community members to policy makers, physicians, and nurses working in the human and animal health sectors with the aim of raising their awareness of the topic which poses a public health threat around the world.

### What is Antimicrobial Resistance? How can it be prevented?

Antimicrobial resistance (AMR) is the natural process whereby disease microbes (bacteria, fungi, viruses, etc...) face mutation that result in them being resistant to antimicrobial drugs. Because of this resistance, drugs become ineffective in treating these microbes which result in a persistent infection and the spread of the infection to others. Hence, AMR is deemed as a public health threat, resulting in lengthened disease duration, increasing the risk of transmission to others: this creates a public health and economic burden.

Misuse or overuse of antibiotics is the leading cause of antimicrobial resistance. Individuals, the healthcare industry, policy makers, health professionals, and the agriculture sector must take part in preventing and controlling antimicrobial resistance. For instance, individuals must only take antibiotics that are prescribed by a trusted health professional, and individuals should take various measures to prevent infections. As to health professionals, they should report antimicrobial resistance to surveillance entities; prescribe antibiotics properly; and educate patients on the prevention of infections. The agriculture industry also bears an important responsibility in preventing antimicrobial resistance since residues of antibiotics remain in the food we eat. The industry must be cautious in the use of antibiotics for animals cultivated for food. While the healthcare industry can play a role in researching new treatments for antimicrobial resistance, policymakers can also put into place necessary measures, plans, and programs to prevent and control this growing public health threat.

### Antimicrobial Resistance in the Eastern Mediterranean Region (EMR)

In the region, “reported rates of resistance have reached dangerous levels both in healthcare settings and the community, threatening the hard-won gains in health and development, and the sustainability of public health response to many communicable diseases.” The situation of this problem in the region is not yet well gauged: not much is known about its impact on human health as well as its economic and social burden. In the region, around a dozen of countries have started developing AMR action plans in line with the World Health Assembly Resolution WHA 68.7. In terms of AMR surveillance, more and more countries are providing data. However, this data lacks standardization, and countries are now beginning to establish the WHO Global Antimicrobial Resistance Surveillance System (GLASS) which “supports a standardized approach to the collection, analysis and sharing of data on AMR at a global level.”

Source: World Health Organization