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EMPHNET's Word By: Dr. Mohannad Al Nsour, Executive Director

As the Third EMPHNET Scientific Regional Conference approaches, it is a time to reflect on the accomplishments, situations, and challenges the Eastern Mediterranean has faced over the last few years. The region's Field Epidemiology Training Programs (FETPs) have flourished despite many obstacles, and the region has a trained Rapid Response Team, comprised of FETP graduates, ready to respond to public emergencies and events. Double burdens of disease, both communicable and non-communicable, are priorities in every country in the region and several NCD projects have successfully been implemented in an effort to build expertise. The Syrian refugee crisis has led to one of the largest refugee populations in history, and the implications this crisis has on the public health situation in the region are far reaching.

In a time of increasing public health needs and diminishing resources, conferences such as the upcoming Scientific Regional Conference are essential in building health capacity in the region. By exchanging experiences and expertise, we all will renew our commitment to achieving excellence in public health, learn new information, and apply this energy and knowledge as we continue our mission to achieve excellence in public health. We look forward to a successful upcoming conference and hope to see you there.



Egypt FETP Holds Introductory Course for Nineteenth Cohort

The Egyptian Field Epidemiology Training Programs and EMPHNET, in collaboration with CDC, conducted the introductory course for Cohort 19 from September 29 – October 8th. The course, held in Abu Dhabi, trained eleven residents in outbreak investigation, surveillance, and data management.

In an effort to strengthen the public health capacity in the Eastern Mediterranean region, participants from the Health Authority of Abu Dhabi were invited and participated in the training. Dr. Amgad Ellkholy, FETP Director, is especially proud of the newly formed FETP staff team, comprised of himself, Dr. Sherien Elnossery and Dr. Maisa Omara, all FETP graduates.



Iraq FETP Leads Outbreak Investigation Capacity Building Workshops

As part of an initiative to train physicians on outbreak investigation, the Iraq FETP has put forth stellar efforts to build the capacity and strengthen the skills of investigating outbreaks and bringing awareness to the subject of outbreaks. To date, six workshops on outbreak investigation have been implemented and a total of 127 physicians from Baghdad and surrounding districts such as Missan, Resafa, and Basara have been trained.

Each workshop, facilitated by two Iraq FETP graduates and two residents from the Iraq FETP second cohort, include lectures and case studies on appropriate topics such as biostatistics relevant to outbreak investigations, basic epidemiologic methods, and steps of an outbreak investigation.

a post test and evaluation is administered at the completion of the workshop and a certificate of attendance is given to each of the participants. An official memo is sent to each Department of Health demonstrating the achievements of their participants.

Dr. Faris Lami, the FETP Resident Advisor believes it is important for the FETP graduates and current residents to take an active leading role in building the capacity of public health in Iraq and the outbreak investigation workshops are an excellent place to start.

Not only are these workshops helping to strengthen the capacity of the physicians in Iraq and bring about an awareness of outbreak investigations, but they are also helping to instill fundamental field epidemiologic skills and a mind set of prevention rather than treatment.

The FETP graduates and current residents leading these workshops are also able to strengthen their skills in teaching and mentoring. The Iraq FETP exemplifies the “Reach one, teach one” philosophy on which the FETP is built and plans to continue their capacity building efforts.



Jordan FETP Begins Tenth Cohort with a New Model

The Jordan Field Epidemiology Training Program (FETP) launched its tenth cohort on August 25th, 2013. Four residents enrolled in this cohort; one from Amman, one from Madaba, and two from Balqa. The Jordanian Ministry of Health combined the FETP with the Community Medicine Residency Program to create a four year program that is accredited as a training program for the Jordanian Board Certificate in Community Medicine.

This FETP Tenth Cohort is the first under this new model. In addition to the FETP training requirements, the resident will be trained in non-communicable disease epidemiology, communicable diseases, mother and child health including family planning, environmental and occupational health, and surveillance. Upon successful completion of the four year program, the residents will be eligible to sit for the Jordanian Board Examination in Community Medicine. Those who successfully pass the Board Exam receive a certificate from the Jordanian Medical Board and are recognized as specialists in the fields of Community Medicine, Field Epidemiology, and Public Health. This certificate is a prestigiously recognized both nationally and regionally. According to Dr. Ibrahim Iblan, the Jordan FETP Director, this new model will encourage candidates to consider the FETP and attract experts in the field of medicine and public health. This will greatly enhance the capacity of public health in Jordan.

Another new focus for the FETP Tenth Cohort is training of epidemiology of non-communicable disease. Although communicable disease will still be a part of the training, The Jordan MOH recognizes the growing burden of non-communicable diseases in

NCD Project- EMPHNET Participates in Wellness Days

The Eastern Mediterranean Public Health Network (EMPHNET), in collaboration with the Ministry of Health, launched two Wellness Days in Ajloun; one in September and one in October.

Rajeb Wellness Day was held on September 24 under the patronage of his Excellency Health Director of Ajloun. The day included opening sessions at the Hospitality House in Rajeb with a welcoming speech and informative lectures regarding the importance of NCD prevention and physical activity. Stations were set up to measure weight, height, blood pressure, blood sugar levels, and body mass index. These stations were staffed by health providers and Jordan Field Epidemiology and Training Program graduates from Ministry of Health. A healthy kitchen demonstration sharing ways to prepare healthy and flavorful food closed out the days' activities.



On October 5, EMPHNET launched Sakhra Wellness Day. The day included opening sessions at the Rehabilitation Center with informative lectures and counseling services on the importance of NCD prevention and physical activity. Health care providers from Sakhra health centers, Ministry of Health, screened for hypertension, diabetes, and measured body mass index. The closing activity included a walking group that demonstrated the benefits of community involvement in physical activity.



The communities of both Rajeb and Sakhra were very involved and excited about Wellness Day and requested more similar activities in the future.

Tajik-Afghan Regional FETP Holds Stakeholders' Workshop

CDC, in collaboration with the Tajik and Afghan Ministries of (Population) and Health, is planning to establish a new regional FETP that would be based in Dushanbe and which would enroll equal numbers of participants from Tajikistan and Afghanistan.

Tajikistan already has a history with the FETP, as a small number of Tajiks participate in the Central Asia Regional (CAR) FETP, based in Almaty, Kazakhstan, each year. The new regional program would therefore meet a critical need for both countries: for Tajikistan, it would allow a larger numbers of Tajiks to participate in an FETP each year, and for Afghanistan, it would provide a safe and secure environment for Afghans to master the program's competencies. The long-term goal would be to build adequate capacity in both countries to eventually sustain their own, individual FETPs. In the short-term, the cultural and linguistic similarities, the overlap of many public health priorities, and the relative political stability of Tajikistan make a combined program attractive.

In mid September 2013, all stakeholders met in Dushanbe to establish the organizational framework and agree to the terms of reference for the program. The purpose of this event was to bring together the principal stakeholders of the program to determine how it should be structured and implemented in order to best meet the public health needs of the two participating countries. Attendees included representatives from the Ministries of (Public) Health of Tajikistan and Afghanistan, as well as CDC, other U.S. Government agencies, and international partners and donors. Agreement was reached on such issues as selection criteria for the Tajik-Afghan FETP residents, the competencies to be acquired, and the career path for the residents upon graduation from the program.



Yemen Launches Second FETP Cohort

The Yemen FETP launched the second cohort in Sana'a Yemen on November 3. Twelve residents from various governorates in Yemen comprise the second cohort.

In addition to the launch of the second FETP, The Yemen FETP has also gained two valuable additions; Dr. Mohamed Qayad as the Yemen FETP Resident Advisor, and Dr. Abdel Wahed Al-serourri as the Yemen FETP Technical Advisor.



Dr. Mohamed Qayad, MD, MSc, MPH, MSPH, has extensive experience in epidemiology and public health. Holding previous positions as an epidemiologist at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, USA and a consultant for such organizations as WHO, Afghanistan and UNAIDS Somalia, Dr. Qayad brings a wealth of knowledge to the Yemen FETP. His areas of expertise include maternal and child health, reproductive health, infectious disease, and community survey design and analysis.

Dr Abdel Wahed Al-serourri is a professor of Community Health, at Sana'a University, Yemen. Dr Al-serourri has carried out a number of researches and surveys in Yemen and has a distinguished research career in both quantitative and qualitative research in the field of epidemiology and clinical medicine. He is an author of many books and journal articles published in international and regional journals.



EMPHNET Participates in Regional Meeting on Cancer Control and Research Priorities

The International Agency for Research on Cancer (IRAC), The World Health Organization (WHO) Eastern Mediterranean Office, and The Supreme Council of Health of Qatar convened in Doha for a three-day high level meeting on cancer prevention.

Dr. Mohannad Nsour, the Executive director of EMPHNET, was invited to participate in this meeting as a speaker. The meeting took place on 20-22 October, 2013, and was attended by the cancer focal point persons of the governments of the member states in the WHO Eastern Mediterranean Region and a number of IRAC senior staff and other international experts. The meeting's aim was to identify priorities for cancer prevention and research in the region and formulate a series of evidence-based recommendations.

