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

Today's world is a world of networking and knowledge sharing. Networks provide a vital platform for information sharing and exchange. EMPHNET recognizes the role of knowledge as a new form for sharing intellectual capacity and innovation, particularly when focusing on global public health issues and concerns. We believe that networks are a vehicle for communicating ideas and for inspiring opportunities to respond to public health needs and problems. Our interest remains focused on exchanging knowledge for the sake of advancing public health practice. Therefore, EMPHNET offers knowledge exchange as one possible

strategy for developing intellectual infrastructure in the area of public health in the region.

EMPHNET is shaped by people, resources, and the link among them, and the multiple efforts of challenging public health difficulties in the region are conveyed through this newsletter. We believe that we can respond to public health challenges by working together towards one common vision.

## The Seventh TEPHINET Global Scientific Conference, 2012

Building capacities, achieving excellence and strengthening collaboration amongst FETP's in the Eastern Mediterranean Region and with other global actors are priority areas for EMPHNET. Those were EMPHNET's reasons when seeking to host the seventh TEPHINET Global Scientific Conference, 2012. Now, and after being granted the conference hosting in Amman 10-15 November, 2012 EMPHNET added a distinguished achievement for the EMR

as it's the first time for the region to host TEPHINET's global conference. The conference hosting will give a momentum to EMPHNET's endeavors to play a leading role in the enhancement of public health both regionally and internationally. **EMPHNET** is carrying out all logistic preparations, which are already underway, in collaboration with TEPHINET, Jordan Ministry of Health and others to set the ground for a distinguished and

successful event. Through presentations, workshops and meetings, trainees and graduates from FELTPs will share their work and scientific investigations with colleagues and experts from around the world. The conference provides an excellent opportunity to exchange best-practices, network with peers, learn from others, and acquire new field epidemiology skills that can be put into action to enhance global public health.



*Part of the workshop activities*

## Abstract Writing Workshop: Using BRFSS

The Eastern Mediterranean Public Health Network (EMPHNET) in cooperation with U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Jordanian Ministry of Health conducted a workshop on abstract writing on 1st & 2nd April, 2012 at the Ministry of Health. Participants were from FETP residents / graduate, NCD Department at MOH, and Ajloun Health Directorate.

The workshop aimed at improving abstract writing skills of participants. Participants worked on analyzing the data set of Ajloun NCD project survey. After analyzing the data, participants were asked to develop draft abstracts.

At the end of the 2-day workshop, participants were able to define an abstract and discuss its use, types, structure and elements, develop research questions, utilize SPSS to analyze data to frame results that support their research question, and write a draft abstract that can be finalized and submitted for a regional or international conference.

The workshop focused on the steps

for developing scientific abstracts by concentrating on essential information and skills to achieve study objectives. The instructional method combined lecture, exercise and practical (hand on) training to promote learning. The definition of an abstract, its types and elements, was presented using PowerPoint. An exercise was used to familiarize the participants with the type of abstracts and the elements of an abstract. In addition, group work was used when working on data analysis and abstract writing in order to enhance engagement and interaction. Participants worked in groups to identify topics for abstracts and practiced data analysis and abstract writing by utilizing Ajloun NCD project BRFSS data. At the end of the workshop the workshop attendees were requested to fill out the evaluation form.

At the end of the two days training, participants were asked to finalize their analysis and to draft abstracts with the goal of submitting final copies of their abstracts within 10 days. These abstracts will be submitted to regional and international conferences.

## EMPHNET attended IHR inter-country meeting in Beirut, Lebanon, 26-28 March 2012

EMPHNET attended an inter-country meeting on strengthening of surveillance and response capacities organized by WHO/EMRO under the International Health Regulation (IHR). Invited countries included IHR National Focal Points who came together to share experience and identify main gaps and challenges in building surveillance and response capacities that are required for implementing IHR (2005).

During the meeting, Dr. Mohannad Al Nsour, Executive Director of EMPHNET presented the current role of EMPHNET in supporting IHR's core capacities by working with Field Epidemiology programs (FETPS) in the region to strengthen communicable diseases surveillance, outbreak investigations, conduction of Epidemiological studies, response, and control of communicable disease at source.

It is worth to mention that IHR 2005 is a formal code of conduct for public health emergencies of international concern and that over 190 member states of WHO has endorsed compliance with these regulations. Almost all EMR countries were unable to implement IHR-2012 within the given timeframe and have either applied, or are in the process of applying, for an extension.

## Second Iraq-FETP Mentors and Field Supervisors Training Workshop

Between May 20th and 24th, of 2012, Iraq-FETP conducted the second training workshop for its mentors and field supervisors. The workshop was sponsored by US CDC and facilitated by three experts from the CDC, and Iraq-FETP Resident Advisor. Eleven participants from the Ministry of Health, five faculties from the Department of Community Medicine - College of Medicine - Baghdad University, and the Director General of the National Center of Occupational Health and Safety - Ministry of labor and Social Affairs. The workshop which was held in the Dead Sea - Jordan, aimed at familiarizing the mentors and field supervisors on the concept of FETP, main core competencies, and activities, as well as developing projects for the program's second cohort of residents.

During the five days, participants were exposed to presentations, case studies, and brainstorming activities. Joint groups of MOHE and MOH members developed, a list of specific issues/problems or new surveillance activities on needed areas for divisions and units of the public health directorate. The groups also worked on developing a preliminary work plan on each of the selected subjects, to ensure a clear vision and proper guidance during the long term assignment. WHO and EMPHNET participated through presentations (on the second and the third day) identifying their roles in supporting Iraq-FETP. The workshop also included a number of social activities to increase collaboration and networking between different partners.



## WHO Lyon, CDC, PN-ME Conduct Foodborne Diseases Training Workshop

Driven by the need to address foodborne diseases in the Eastern Mediterranean Region (EMR), the World Health Organization (WHO), Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), PulseNet-Middle East (PN-ME) and Naval Army Medical Research Unit-3 (NAMRU-3) conducted a Foodborne diseases training workshop. Representatives from Ministries of Health in Bahrain, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Oman, Palestine, Qatar and Municipality of Dubai attended the four-day workshop which took place between March 25th and 28th, of 2012, in Amman, Jordan. Graduates of Egypt, Iraq, Jordan and Morocco FETPs participated in the workshop as observers.

Under the title of "Joint PulseNet-Middle East (PN-ME) and Global Foodborne Infections Network (GFN)" the training workshop included plenary sessions, lectures, group works, case studies and tabletop exercises on versified topics related to food safety and Foodborne diseases. Experts from WHO, CDC,

NAMRU-3 and Eastern Mediterranean Public Health Network (EMPHNET) facilitated the workshop sessions.

Dr. Jawad Mofleh, Epidemiologist at EMPHNET, represented the Network and gave a lecture on "Examples of Outbreak Investigations in EMR". On the sidelines of the Workshop, Dr. Mofleh met with WHO EMRO, CDC, PulseNET, and NAMRU-3 representatives, in addition to public health representatives from Dubai, Morocco, Lebanon, Qatar, Bahrain and Iraq. During these meetings, parties discussed their interest to collaborate in different public health projects; including projects related to food safety and foodborne diseases.

It is worth noting that, all participants stressed the need to establish networks of epidemiologists and laboratorians on national and provincial levels to facilitate information sharing across ministries thus improving outbreak investigations on Foodborne diseases.

## Iraq FETP Third Outbreak Investigation Workshop

The third outbreak investigation workshop was held in Missan province, on 3-7 June, 2012 for the lower south provinces Thiqr, Basrah and Missan by the Ministry of Health and Iraq Field Epidemiology Training Program (FETP). The total number of workshop participants was 13 public health provider - physicians; 5 from Thiqr, 5 from Missan and 3 from Basrah.

The training workshop composed of two part; theoretical part (lectures) and practical part (case studies). The workshop started with an introduction covering the aim of the workshop, a brief introduction about field epidemiology training program, followed by administering a pre-test before starting the theoretical part of the workshop which included the following topics:

- Principles of biostatistics and measuring disease frequency (Dr.Haidar A. Hantosh).
- Mathematical data presentation (Dr.Haidar A. Hantosh).
- Pictorial data presentation ( Dr. Abdul'al )
- Descriptive study design (Haider).
- Analytical study design (Dr.abdul'al)
- Steps of an outbreak investigation ( Dr.Haidar +Dr.Abdul'al)

Dr. Haidar +Dr. Abdul'al facilitated the practical part which included discussion and presentation of the following case studies:

- Case Study/Oswego
- Case Study/Jordan Brucellosis
- Case Study/Pak (cholera)
- Use of computer software in outbreak investigation to make the line list and data analysis

At the end of the workshop a post-test was administered followed by handing out certificates by Dr. Kahtan (Iraq - FETP Executive Manager).

## Outbreak of Dengue/ Chikungunya in Hodeidah Governorate, Yemen, 2012

At the end of April, the Yemen FETP officers were asked to assist in an outbreak investigation. As of 27 May, 732 suspected cases of Dengue/ Chikungunya, were reported from Hodeidah. Of these, 10 were laboratory-confirmed as Chikungunya, and 28 were laboratory-confirmed as dengue. A total number of 58 cases were presented with hemorrhagic manifestations, and twelve deaths were associated with this outbreak, of which one case was laboratory-confirmed as being attributable to Chikungunya.

The Ministry of Health implemented several outbreak mitiga-

tion measures including education of health care workers which included a training workshop on enhancing surveillance particularly with regard to the importance of reporting cases for epidemiological surveillance, education of the community (including schools and mosques) to raise awareness of Dengue - Chikungunya, and strengthening of partnerships of entities located in Hodeidah Governorate to ensure integrated vector control.

With regard to vector control, steps were taken to identify where the *Aedes aegypti* vector is established and the Ministry of Health

conducted a spraying campaign in Hodeidah city and other districts throughout Hodeidah Governorate.

It should be noted that in response to the outbreak, the Cabinet of Yemen showed political commitment by holding a meeting for the outbreak in Hudaidah, and instructing the Minister of Finance to allocate budget for the governorate. In turn, the Yemeni Minister of Health visited Al-Hudaidah to supervise the intervention activities and mobilize the local authorities.

