



**World Health
Organization**

Lebanon

WHO Lebanon Country Office is the directing and coordinating authority for international health work within the United Nations. We work closely and in coordination with the Ministry of Public Health and other ministries as well as sister UN agencies operating in Lebanon.

We work on improving health outcomes by providing technical support and assistance in scaling up essential prevention, treatment and care services throughout the health sector.

NEWSLETTER

November 2019 - Issue 3

National campaign for World Antibiotic Awareness Week



WALK the TALK

ANNOUNCEMENT

The Beirut Marathon 2019 has been canceled due to the prevailing situation in the country.

With the hope that 2020 brings us together in the marathon again.

For the occasion of the World Antibiotic Awareness Week (18 - 24 November 2019), the WHO Lebanon Country Office and the Ministry of Public Health, in collaboration with the Modern University for Business and Science (MUBS) implemented an awareness raising campaign about Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR). Three booths were set-up and nine trained front-liners approached mall-goers and talked to them about AMR, distributed flyers, invited them to participate in activities and take pictures using the WAAW props. The Lebanese Medical Students International Committee (LeMSIC) supported the campaign; 90 LeMSIC members volunteered at the booths with the MUBS front-liners. Over the course of the week, the booths rotated across Lebanon in 11 malls and more than 17000 mall-goers were approached. Moreover, WHO and the MOPH launched a TV and a radio spot highlighting the following three main messages; a caregiver consulting a physician before giving their child antibiotics, pharmacists not selling antibiotics unless a prescription is available, and physicians prescribing antibiotics only when necessary.



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Implementation of the national microbiology proficiency testing exercise for hospital labs



As part of the roll out of the Antimicrobial Resistance National Action Plan, and with the support of WHO Lebanon Country Office, the Ministry of Public Health launched in April 2019 a national microbiology proficiency testing exercise which included three rounds of training that ended in November 2019. The exercise was implemented in partnership with Universite Saint Joseph- Research laboratory, and the

American University of Beirut- Microbiology laboratory. The three training workshops were attended by around 240 participants from 130 hospital laboratories, thereby covering all the hospitals in Lebanon. This proficiency testing exercise is a preparatory phase for the establishment of a national Laboratory External Quality Assurance system (EQAS) that will help in enhancing the quality of microbiology laboratory data which will guide future research and interventions.

WHO joins AFD to support mental health system reform in Lebanon



WHO signed an agreement of partnership with AFD - Agence Française de Développement to support the mental health system reform in Lebanon. The project was signed on 20 November 2019 in the presence of the French Ambassador, H.E. Mr. Bruno Foucher. This project is a collaborative initiative with the MOPH- National Mental Health Programme that aims at strengthening the mental health governance and legal framework, towards the vision that all persons in Lebanon have the right to enjoy the best possible mental health and wellbeing. The project has two major pillars. The first one covers advocacy and lobbying for passing the mental health law in the country. It will provide a platform for engagement with key stakeholders in mental health in Lebanon. The second pillar aims at building a sustainable university diploma on mental health, graduating a cohort of 10 students in its first year. This project also allows capitalization of lessons learnt from the Lebanese mental health system reform.

Kuwait Fund earmarks \$4.6m fund for national measles campaign



The WHO Eastern Mediterranean Regional Office EMRO Regional Director Dr Al-Mandhari met with the Kuwait Fund Director General Abdelwahab Al Bader to extend thanks for strategic partnership and support provided by the approval of \$4.6M fund to respond to the measles outbreak in Lebanon.

An Integrated Bio-Behavioral Surveillance Study among Men Who Have Sex with Men and Commercial Sex Workers

The National AIDS Program continues to provide life-saving services to people living with HIV and populations at risk of acquiring HIV. The Integrated Bio-Behavioral Surveillance conducted at the end of 2018 helped confirm that the HIV epidemic is concentrated among Men who have Sex with Men (MSM) in Lebanon and provided a national epidemiological update on HIV and syphilis among this subgroup. The NAP is currently conducting a national study across this same population to determine the current prevalence and risk factors associated with different Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs) such as Hepatitis B and C, Chlamydia, Gonorrhea, Ureaplasma, Mycoplasma genitalium, Trichomoniasis, and HPV. This study will help contribute to the available literature on the topic, identify gaps in prevention services, and inform planning and implementation of future activities targeting MSM including methods to provide successful outreach and health services.

Main Findings of the IBBS



STIGMA/DISCRIMINATION

Synergistic stigma and discrimination by individuals, security forces and society (due to sexual identity and behavior).



TESTING HIV

- 12.0% (L) and 3.0% (NL) among MSM
- 0.8% (L) and 0.0% (NL) among CSWs Syphilis
- 3.6% (L) and 0.4% (NL) among MSM
- 1.2% (L) and 0.0% (NL) among CSWs

RISKY BEHAVIORS

Practice of multiple risky behaviors (including engagement in sex work, inconsistency in condom use with commercial and non-commercial partners, alcohol and drug use, and drug injection).



SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED INFECTIONS

- Poor knowledge on STIs' symptoms.
- Increasing prevalence of STIs' symptoms.

Participation of Lebanon in the EMARIS and completion of the national influenza center external quality assurance



As part of the pandemic influenza preparedness in the country, Lebanon participated in the Second Scientific Conference on Acute Respiratory Infection in the Eastern Mediterranean Region and 5th Meeting of the Eastern Mediterranean Acute Respiratory Infection Surveillance (EMARIS) Network that was held in Morocco from 12th to 15th of November 2019. During the conference, a representative from the epidemiological surveillance unit (ESU) at the Ministry of Public Health (MOPH) in Lebanon presented a quantitative assessment of the surveillance of severe acute respiratory infection (SARI) in the country while a representative from the National Influenza Center (NIC) at the Rafik Hariri University Hospital (RHUH) presented the results and achievements of the laboratory based surveillance from 2015-2019. Both abstracts were highly valued by experts and considered integral to improving the quality of epidemiological and virological surveillance data with the overarching goal of enhancing pandemic influenza preparedness in the region. In parallel, the NIC in Lebanon has successfully completed the WHO External Quality Assessment Programme (EQAP) for the detection of influenza viruses by RT-PCR for the second year in a row.

Concept of People-Centred Primary Care



Nowadays, people are living longer, sometimes with multiple diseases and conditions, while often not being informed or consulted in the care they receive, though living with some of their conditions 24/7 and not only when they seek care. In some countries, only 1 in 3 people receive explanation about the risks related to their treatment, 1 in 5 people undertake at least 1 unnecessary test and up to 40% of the health expenditure is wasted due to inefficiency. People-Centered Care is an approach that considers the people using health and social services as equal partners in taking care of their health and in designing the services in a way that ensures it meets their needs. It puts people and their families/carers at the centre of the decisions, interacting with them as

WHO is currently working with the MOPH on integrating the people-centred primary care approach within the national primary health-care centers network, with the ultimate aim of improving health outcomes and quality of life for people, and reducing avoidable demand for health and care services. This project is funded by the European Union.

experts that are working alongside professionals to get the best outcome. Being people-centered means focusing on the elements of care, support and treatment that matter most to the patient, their family and carers. People-centred care relies on 4 main principles: personalized care, coordinated care, enabling care for a fulfilling life, and treatment of persons with dignity, compassion, respect. People-Centered Care aims to provide healthcare experiences and services that attain the health-related goals of the people being served. It focuses on the entire person and not only on the treatment of the disease. It encourages people to lead a healthier lifestyle and to be more involved in decisions about their healthcare leading to getting services and support that are more adapted to their needs, improving their health outcomes.

Upcoming events....

- Capacity building of MOPH staff in identification of epi-linked measles cases
- National measles campaign - The Expanded Program on Immunization (EPI) at the MOPH in Lebanon is launching a national measles campaign on the 6th of December 2019.
- HIV/MSM problem in Lebanon.
- The current ongoing research on STI supported by WHO Lebanon
- A Healthy City Program on community-based solid waste management in Tripoli and related cleaning campaign in collaboration with the municipality of Tripoli.
- Closing of the palliative care project implemented by SANAD.