

25 April 2019 – On 4 April 2019 the Egyptian Ministry of Health and Population held a seminar on health and health-related risk communication and introduced the Ministry's newly-established risk communication unit. Establishment of the unit was approved by Her Excellency the Minister of Health and Population Dr Hala Zayed in March 2019 in response to the recommendations of the joint external evaluation (JEE) report, produced as part of the International Health Regulations (2005) monitoring and evaluation framework. Egypt conducted its JEE mission in September–October 2018 to assess its capacity to prevent, detect, and respond to public health threats. The evaluation resulted in several recommendations to develop national health risk communication as a public health core capacity.

Dr Alaa Eid, Head of the Preventive Sector and a keynote speaker at the seminar, said that the establishment of this unit represented a way forward in ensuring optimum preparedness and response to public health threats and emergencies. The seminar was attended by 35 representatives of various technical departments at the Ministry of Health and Population, in addition to representatives of the Ministries of Interior and Agriculture and Land Reclamation, the National Food Safety Agency, National Agency of Nuclear and Radiological Activities and the Cabinet of Ministers.

Dr Omar Abou El Ata, Technical Officer for Health Emergencies, WHO country office in Egypt, gave a presentation on the role of risk communication in health emergencies as a component of the 19 technical areas covered by the evaluation to strengthen implementation of core capacities required under the IHR. Dr Noha Salah, Head of the Risk Communication Unit gave an introductory lecture on health and health-related risk communication.

The seminar represented an opportunity for open discussion between concerned stakeholders on the future of the unit and way forward in maximizing its capacity and contribution to all relevant sectors within and beyond the Ministry of Health and Population. Participants emphasized the importance of developing a national strategy for health-related risk communication and possible expansion of the unit.

Attendees of the seminar were logged into a database as focal persons for their departments/ministries/agencies for future cooperation and coordination.

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