



Cairo, 16 March 2022 – A WHO mission to Saudi Arabia has found that the Procedures are in place for processing specimens from start to finish. Photo: WHO/A. Barakat
country's public health laboratory operating within the Public Health Authority has fulfilled the requirements for WHO to recommend recognition of the laboratory as a national
influenza centre for Saudi Arabia.

The public health laboratory plays a critical role in surveillance and support of public health informatics to rapidly detect and monitor infectious diseases, outbreak investigations
and scientific analysis of known, novel and emerging diseases.

The laboratory designated by the Ministry of Health as the national influenza laboratory in 2017 has been expanding its services for the subtyping of influenza and other
respiratory viruses to participate in the new integrated surveillance programme in the country. This in addition to the COVID-19 laboratory that acted as a reference laboratory
through the pandemic for COVID-19 testing. There is also a genome laboratory with a very wide range of platforms and advanced technologies for genome sequencing.

To address public health priorities, public health laboratories are expanding their services to include active surveillance programmes for antimicrobial resistance, food safety,
environmental health and high containment facilities. They are also offering a range of programmes and functions, including a WHO-accredited national polio laboratory to
support global polio eradication activities, a vaccine-preventable diseases laboratory with reference diagnostics and surveillance for measles, mumps, and rubella, and a laboratory
for measles genotyping.

The aim of the mission was to assess the compliance of the laboratory through the WHO terms of reference to become a WHO-recognized national influenza centre, as well as a
formal member of the WHO Global Influenza Surveillance and Response System (GISRS).

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