



High-level officials from the Ministry of Health of Saudi Arabia participated in a risk communication workshop from 4 to 6 August 2015. The training workshop was jointly organized by the WHO Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean and the Global Center for Mass Gathering Medicine (GCMGM), at the request of the Ministry of Health. Participants included delegates from the Ministry of Health, GCMGM, as well as from the MERS coronavirus command control centre.

Dr Hamad Al Duweila, Vice Minister for Health Affairs complimented the workshop, "We want to build on the cooperation from here onward after this very successful workshop on emergency risk communication. It takes the effort of all actors to respond effectively in public health events."

The purpose of the workshop was to equip public health policy-makers and other decision-makers with skills for communicating risk among the population, as well as keeping media informed, during mass gatherings. Risk communication priorities and principles were examined thoroughly. The workshop provided an opportunity for key stakeholders to arrive at a common understanding of risk communication and how to coordinate their efforts to bring about better public health outcomes during a public health emergency or outbreak.

The workshop was tailored for the senior management of Saudi Arabia's Ministry of Health. Among the participants were Dr Abdulaziz bin Saeed, Deputy Minister Public Health; Dr Hail Mater Al Alabdely, Director General of Health Facilities; Dr Rafat Hakeem, Director General Infectious Disease Control; Dr Mostafa Jamil Baljoon, General Directorate of Health Affairs in Makkah Region; Dr Abdul Hafiz Maarooof Turkistani, Assistant Director General of Health Affairs for Public Health, Makkah region; Dr Khalid Al Marghalani, the Advisor to the Minister and

Supervisor General of Public Relations; and Dr Tariq bin Salem Al-'Arnous, Director-General of Health Emergency.

Highly energetic and interactive discussion sessions took place to address how to mitigate public health threats. Table-top exercises, using real-life examples, were conducted to anchor all learning throughout the three-day workshop.

Communications is one of the core capacities in the public health response under the International Health Regulations (IHR). Risk communications at best brings better health outcomes in the event of a public health emergency of international concern.

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