

Irrational use of medicines is a major problem worldwide. The World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that more than half of all medicines are prescribed, dispensed or sold inappropriately and that half of all patients fail to take them correctly. In an effort to support Member States in implementing and monitoring a national strategy to promote rational use of medicines, a technical workshop was organized by the Executive Board of the Health Ministers' Council for Cooperation Council States, and the WHO Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean. Both parties had signed a cooperation protocol focusing on the rational use of medicines in countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC).

The workshop was held in Oman from 7 to 9 November 2010. Participants included representatives from the Ministry of Health of the United Arab Emirates, Assistant Director General and Head of the Central Registration at the Executive Board of the Health Ministers' Council for Cooperation.

The main purpose of this gathering was to explore potential strategies and interventions to promote the rational use of medicines as well as introduce the Omani experience in improving the use of medicines, and develop a relevant action plan. Agenda topics included various presentations on rational use of medicines. Participating countries presented their experiences and engaged in facilitated discussions on improving the rational use of medicines in countries of the GCC.

The workshop recommendations confirmed the need for regional, sub-regional and national coordination. Evaluation of more interventions at the managerial, economic, and regulatory levels were considered vital for improving rational use and access to essential medicines as well as enhancing pharmaceutical policies.

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