

The technical workshop on the rational use of medicines was organized by the Executive Board of the Health Ministers' Council for Cooperation Council States and the World Health Organization Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean. Both parties had signed a protocol of cooperation focusing on the rational use of medicines in member countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC).

The workshop aimed to provide technical assistance, review the current situation and discuss achievements and constraints with reference to the rational use of medicines. About 30 participants from Oman, a representative from the Ministry of Health of the United Arab Emirates, the Assistant Director General and Head of the Central Registration at the Executive Board of the Health Ministers' Council for Cooperation participated in the workshop.

Rational use of medicine requires that patients receive medications appropriate to their clinical needs, in doses that meet their own individual requirements for an adequate period of time, and at the lowest cost to them and their community. The importance of this event lied in discussing strategies and interventions to promote the rational use of medicines, introducing the Omani experience on improving the use of medicines, setting up priorities and developing an action plan for rational use.

The programme of the workshop included presentations on rational use of medicines globally, in member countries of the GCC and in Oman. Participating countries presented their experience and engaged in facilitated discussions on improving the rational use of medicines in member countries of the GCC. Irrational use of medicines is a very serious global public health problem, as more than 50% of all medicines are prescribed, dispensed or sold inappropriately, and half of all patients fail to take medicines correctly. Therefore, policy implementation is needed at the regional, subregional and national levels. Evaluation of more interventions is crucial, particularly managerial, economic and regulatory interventions. Coordination between WHO Regional Office and the Executive Board of the Health Ministers' Council for GCC States will continue to strive towards better access to essential medicines, enhanced pharmaceutical policies and more rational use of medicines.

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