



19 July 2020, Cairo, Egypt – More than one million patients in countries of the Eastern Mediterranean Region have successfully recovered from COVID-19 since the first case was reported on 29 January 2020.

“This is a welcome and significantly positive milestone, and reflects the efforts made by countries to protect their populations during these very challenging times,” said Dr Ahmed Al-Mandhari, WHO Regional Director for the Eastern Mediterranean. “Individuals also play a key role by being properly informed, taking appropriate measures to protect themselves and their families, recognizing symptoms when they occur, and seeking medical support immediately before their condition becomes critical. All of this contributes to effective containment and unnecessary loss of life.”

While the number of cases, including recovered cases, is not comprehensively reported to WHO, countries currently reporting the highest number of recovered cases are Islamic Republic of Iran, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and Qatar. The same countries are also reporting the highest numbers of infected cases.

Successful treatment of patients requires timely diagnosis and health system capacity to provide treatment, and also protect health care workers and provide sufficient medical supplies. From its regional logistics hub in Dubai, WHO has so far delivered personal protective equipment, including almost 7.5 million surgical masks and 125 000 respirators for health care workers, to all countries in the Region.

Efforts are also under way to identify effective treatments and develop vaccines for COVID-19 in order to save more lives. WHO is currently tracking more than 1700 clinical trials globally that are investigating nearly 200 therapeutic options or their combinations. There are also 23 candidate vaccines undergoing clinical evaluation, while another 140 candidate vaccines are in pre-clinical evaluation.

In the Eastern Mediterranean Region, Egypt, Islamic Republic of Iran, Kuwait, Lebanon, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia are participating in the Solidarity Trial to test the effectiveness of Remdesivir and Interferon beta-1a in the treatment of hospitalized patients. Additionally, Afghanistan, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Pakistan, Somalia, Sudan, Syrian Arab Republic, United Arab Emirates and Yemen are participating or planning to participate in the Unity Studies that aim to analyse COVID-19 transmission patterns, severity, clinical features and risk factors for infection, as well as levels of infection and antibody response. The United Arab Emirates has also launched a clinical trial of a COVID-19 vaccine candidate under development by China.

“Countries in the Region are fully committed to containing transmission and saving lives. Despite the increasing numbers of cases reported, there are proven measures that work: strong government leadership and informed communities are essential to controlling disease spread, and also promoting recovery of patients. By now, we all know what needs to be done to turn around the course of this pandemic. As research for vaccines and treatment continues, this landmark milestone of one million recovered cases in our Region should give us all even more determination and drive to succeed,” said Dr Al-Mandhari.

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