



Role of

Primary Health Care

in the Context of COVID-19 Pandemic



6 September 2020, Cairo □ A new online training resource on “Primary health care (PHC) practice in the context of COVID-19” has been developed by the WHO Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean and partners and will be launched tomorrow, Monday, 7 September 2020.

The online training aims to support PHC personnel in their efforts to maintain essential services and to effectively assist in controlling the pandemic. It focuses on four main areas: maintaining essential health services; preventing COVID-19 through supporting effective public health measures; diagnosing COVID-19 cases and ensuring adequate referral; and managing mild and moderate COVID-19 cases.

Maintaining essential services is critical at these times in which immunization, maternal, child and adolescent health services, as well as efforts to control and treat communicable and noncommunicable diseases and provide mental health services, are being interrupted due to COVID-19 and are jeopardizing hard earned health gains.

The online course is the outcome of joint collaboration between the WHO Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean, World Organization of Family Doctors (WONCA) and United Nations partners, including the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), to ensure that primary health care is integrated into national COVID-19 response plans.

Coming amid many challenges facing health systems in the Region and beyond, including the very real need to control COVID-19, the launch of this PHC training resource is timely. It also corresponds with the need to ensure a comprehensive approach to COVID-19, where all levels of care are mobilized and complement one another.

The new initiative is also aligned with the regional vision of “Health for All by All”. Dr Ahmed Al-Mandhari, WHO Regional Director for the Eastern Mediterranean, has reiterated the necessity of ensuring that people everywhere continue to receive the essential health services they need amid the COVID-19 pandemic. PHC has an essential role in controlling the pandemic and in achieving “Health for All” and the targets of the health-related Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The course content will be updated periodically, and the trainees will receive certificates of completion from WHO accredited for 15 hours under the category I credit system of the American Association of Continuing Medical Education (AACME).

The training is one of several successful products of partnership under the Regional Health Forum, and the “Global Action Plan for Healthy Lives and Well-being for All”, which identifies PHC as the primary driver in achieving SDG 3 to ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages. WHO has been collaborating with other United Nations agencies and WONCA to support countries in adopting this comprehensive, integrated approach.

Development partners strongly encourage PHC physicians, working in the public and private sectors in the Region, to undertake this training.

The virtual launch of this important initiative will take place in the presence of heads of United Nations agencies and other organizations, the President of WONCA in the Eastern Mediterranean Region and ministers of health of the Region, who will have an opportunity to provide feedback on the course.

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