12 December 2017 – The World Health Organization launched a 4-day meeting of the Eastern Mediterranean Acute Respiratory Infection Surveillance (EMARIS) Network in Amman, Jordan today, to review progress made in surveillance and response capacities in regional countries for seasonal and pandemic influenza.

The meeting, which runs from 11 to 14 December 2017, includes the first ever scientific conference on acute respiratory infections (ARIs) in the Eastern Mediterranean Region, engaging aspiring young scientists, health researchers, and seasoned public health professionals from the Region to present their latest research findings on ARIs, influenza surveillance, laboratory detection, collaboration at the animal-human interface, and related subjects. The theme of the conference is Better Understanding, Better Preparedness and Better Response.

Dr Jaouad Mahjour, Acting WHO Regional Director for the Eastern Mediterranean expressed his support for the work of the EMARIS network over the years, and its collaboration with young public health researchers to further advance the knowledge and expertise on influenza surveillance and response.

"The scientific evidence presented here will help the Region collectively to shape our public health agenda to better prepare and respond in a timely manner to pandemic threats from novel respiratory viruses," Dr Mahjour said.

While seasonal influenza occurs regularly among humans, pandemic influenza is highly unpredictable, and can adversely affect populations across geographic expanses. In order to mitigate the risk of pandemics, countries are encouraged to strengthen their response and detection capacities with improved understanding by sharing data on influenza and respiratory illnesses.

EMARIS is a network of countries in the Eastern Mediterranean Region working collaboratively to strengthen influenza surveillance, improve the use of surveillance data, and conduct ground-breaking research related to influenza and other respiratory viruses. At present, 19 of the 22 countries in the Region have implemented SARI and ILI surveillance, with enhanced data collection and analysis attributes.

The Fourth EMARIS meeting and First Scientific Conference is being attended by nearly 140 participants from 20 countries, and hosted by WHO in partnership with US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and Global Health Development (GHD).

EMARIS 2017 – Interviews and informational videos

Related links

Pandemic influenza preparedness framework

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