



MERS experts convened in Abu Dhabi from 23 to 25 October 2018 to exchange expertise and discuss the establishment of an expert pool (Photo: Lubna Al Ariqi/WHO)

25 October 2018 – From 23 to 25 October 2018, the WHO Eastern Mediterranean Regional Office convened a training workshop in Abu Dhabi on improving public health preparedness and readiness measures for response to the threat of [Middle East respiratory syndrome \(MERS\)](#) . About 25 representatives from the ministries of health of Bahrain, Egypt, Jordan, Kuwait, Oman, Saudi Arabia, Sudan and United Arab Emirates attended this workshop.

Experts from health authorities in the Eastern Mediterranean region and from WHO's Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean (EMRO), the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Erasmus Medical center, the WHO Collaborating Centers, the World Organization for Animal Health (OIE), the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), and from Columbia University's Mailman School of Public Health also joined the workshop and shared their expertise on tackling MERS as well as best practices and public health measures with the greatest impact in containing the spread of the disease.

The workshop provided an opportunity to discuss and review the global evidence accumulated, so far, in the response to the threats posed by Middle East respiratory syndrome coronavirus (MERS-CoV) since its emergence in 2012. The workshop also produced invaluable technical discussions on improving preparedness and readiness measures for MERS, such as improving surveillance and field investigations at the animal-human interface under a "One Health" approach, enhancing data sharing between the two sectors, strengthening infection prevention and control practices in healthcare settings, addressing existing knowledge gaps through priority research, and developing new diagnostic tests to early detect MERS patient at point of care.

Additionally, participants drafted and discussed a checklist to assess national preparedness and readiness level for detection and response to MERS, which is expected to assist the national health authorities to improve MERS response efforts.

MERS continues to be a public health threat to the countries of WHO Eastern Mediterranean Region and globally. This workshop built on the available regional expertise and knowledge on MERS to establish a pool of experts that can be deployed rapidly during any future MERS outbreak inside and beyond the Region. As MERS is a zoonotic disease, this pool of experts would also be used to rapidly support any national or international outbreak response to any other emerging respiratory or zoonotic infection.

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