Submission deadline: 1 June 2020 (no longer accepting proposals)
Submission deadline for COVID-19 research proposals: 15 May 2020 (no longer accepting proposals)

Now closed

WHO's Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean is pleased to announce the eleventh call for research proposals under the grant for Research in Priority Areas of Public Health 2020–2021. The aim of the grant is to promote health research as a tool for national development programming, and to increase the use of evidence-based action and health planning for provision of equitable health care.

The focus for this round of the Special Grant for Research in Priority Areas of Public Health are the strategic directions identified in WHO's strategy for the Eastern Mediterranean Region, 2020–2023 Turning Vision 2023 into action ; priority areas include:

Communicable disease prevention and control

- Relationship of vaccine hesitancy with routine or supplementary immunization coverage.
- Digitalization and immunization data quality (comparative regional studies).
- Factors affecting inequality in immunization in countries of low immunization coverage in the Region.

Noncommunicable diseases (NCDs) and mental health

- Barriers and potential solutions for implementing multisectoral actions on NCD prevention and control.
- Status of childhood cancer burden and management capacity.
- Assessing knowledge, prevalence and use of novel tobacco products.

Healthier populations

- Implementing multisectoral interventions for addressing NCD risk factors in the context of the Healthy Cities Programme.
- Systematic review of innovative approaches for promoting community engagement in public health interventions.
- Accessibility barriers of adolescents to reproductive health services.

Environmental health and food safety

- Health outcomes most affected by climate change.
- Sources of air pollution (source apportionment studies).
- Readiness of hospitals to deal with chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear events.

Health systems development

- Models of care for assuring integrated people-centred health services in the Region in moving towards universal health coverage (UHC).
- Migration patterns of health workers in the Region.
- Patterns of use and access to medicines between different socioeconomic groups including insured versus uninsured population groups in the Region.

Science, information and dissemination

- Cost-effective measures to improve quality of data from national health information systems or its sub-information systems.
- Assessing and improving quality of cause of deaths notifications/reports, issued by Forensic Medicine Department/coroners (compliant with International Classification (ICD) certification rules).
- Essential requirements of health facility data that ensure production of valid and reliable information.

Health emergencies

- Comparing services against needs provided to populations affected by emergencies.
- Assessing the quality of health services provided to populations using standardized tools in emergency settings.
- Effectiveness and acceptance of oral cholera vaccines in the Region.

This round of calls includes a special call for COVID-19 research in response to the current pandemic. The priority areas for COVID-19 proposals include:

Epidemiology and surveillance

- Epidemiology (incidence, mortality rates, etc.) of COVID-19 associated with NCDs, mental health and neurological and substance use and NCD risk factors in countries of the Region.

- Identification and handling high-risk groups in populations of the Region.
- Role of wild-life, domestic and companion animals in transmission of COVID-19 to humans.
- Can COVID-19 be transmitted in indoor non health care settings environments?
- Physical distancing measures: impact on flattening the COVID-19 epi curve.

- Risk factors for severity of COVID-19 infection, including co-morbidity, medications, tobacco use, source of infection (case-control study).
- Linkages between tobacco use, electronic nicotine delivery systems (ENDS) and COVID-19 in the Region.
- Impact of COVID-19 on people living with malnutrition in low-income countries.
- Geospatial modelling to forecast the geographic distribution of COVID-19 with countries of the Region.
- Implementing multisectoral interventions for addressing COVID-19 risk factors in the context of the Healthy Cities Programme.
- Use of machine learning in monitoring and evaluating the response to COVID-19.
- Assessment and mitigation of ethical challenges in research in a pandemic situation.

Community engagement, infection prevention and control

- Role of risk communication and community engagement in responding to COVID-19 infection prevention and control measures in reproductive, maternal, neonatal, child and adolescent health care in the context of COVID-19.
- How efficient is the disinfection of streets and open spaces?

Health systems and services

- Comparing essential/basic health services (both quantity and quality) during the COVID-19 pandemic against needs provided to populations in fragile, conflict-affected and violent settings.
- Acceptability and effectiveness of remote delivery of mental health and neurological and substance use disorders services.
- Health system strengthening for better response and improved preparedness in the context of COVID-19.
- Models of care and services (re)organization to ensure continuity of services (e.g. maternal and child, NCDs, immunizations, etc.) during emergencies, including outbreaks and pandemics.
- Expanding UHC, ensuring no one is left behind, e.g. refugees, IDPs, migrants and other vulnerable groups, including during emergencies and outbreaks.
- Use of cause of death and/or routine health information system data for identification and validation of COVID-19 cases and outbreak control.
- Decision-making processes at national level and use of evidence in a pandemic situation.

- Effectiveness and feasibility of using digital health solutions in response to COVID-19 needs.

Disaster preparedness and response (updated 27 April 2020)

- Transmission risks and patterns of COVID-19 in quarantine centres in countries of the Region.
- Effectiveness of contact tracing models in countries of the Region.
- Impact of COVID-19 pandemic on countries with protracted emergencies.

- Assessment of effectiveness of EWARN system in detecting and responding to COVID-19.
- Performance of point of entry surveillance systems in detecting COVID-19.
- Knowledge, Attitudes and Practices study on acceptance and adherence to non-pharmaceutical public health interventions for COVID-19 containment, prevention and control.
- Monitoring response for the COVID-19 pandemic in the Region.
- Molecular and serological investigation of COVID-19 infected patients to detect multiple shedding routes.
- Detection of IgG and neutralizing antibodies against COVID-19 among recovered cases of COVID-19 (longitudinal cohort studies).
- Detection of asymptomatic carrier state of COVID-19 through national screening programmes.
- Assessment of COVID-19 infection prevention and control practices and measures among health care workers.
- Physicians' knowledge, attitudes and practices regarding clinical management of COVID-19 cases.
- Prediction models for assessment of health care capacity to manage COVID-19 cases in the Region.
- IHR (2005) implementation and COVID-19: how linked they are.
- Enhancing country preparedness: lessons learned from the COVID-19.
- Assessing the COVID-19 disaster management/response practices, experiences and capturing lessons earned.
- Challenges in response to outbreaks/epidemics/pandemics in areas affected by conflicts with more than one governing authority.
- Social media and its role in early warning, alert and response.

When preparing your research proposals, please consider the health needs of marginalized and underserved populations and risks, and disaggregation of collected data by sex, age and socioeconomic quintiles in your analysis plan.

See the " Guidelines and Application Form " for more details and information.

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