



About 40 million people in the Region have disabling hearing loss, and one in three persons above the age of 65 years lives with some form of hearing impairment. The WHO Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean, in collaboration with the Supreme Council for Health, Qatar, organized a regional workshop on strengthening and integrating the ear and hearing care programme within primary health care and health systems from 18 to 20 November 2013 in Doha, Qatar.

The purpose of the workshop was to improve the ear and hearing health activities in the Region under the renewal of primary health care reform as recommended in the World Health Report 2008.

The objectives of the workshop were to:

- Review the current situation of ear and hearing care activities in the Region;
- Identify possible ways to strengthen ear and hearing care programmes in primary health care and health systems;
- Determine required action to strengthen early detection of hearing loss through screening programmes;
- Identify the needs for establishing a training programme for primary health care workers on ear and hearing care in the Region;
- Establish a partnership network with the organizations working in ear and hearing care programmes.

The workshop was a follow-up of the regional workshop for the integration of ear and hearing care in primary health care in Riyadh in December 2011. The workshop was inaugurated by Dr Salih Ali Al-Marri, General Secretary Assistant for Medical Affairs, Supreme Council of Health, Qatar.

In the opening session, Dr Ala Alwan, WHO Regional Director for the Eastern Mediterranean, noted that a major step in minimizing the burden of hearing impairment was ensuring early detection in babies, infants and children, within the framework of primary health care. He emphasized that early detection and treatment of common diseases causing hearing impairment through school, the community and primary health care within the health system could have a tremendous impact on improving ear and hearing care in the Region. At least half of all cases of hearing loss, he said, are easily preventable.

The regional workshop was attended by 53 participants including representatives from Member States and other technical experts. Professional associations and nongovernmental organizations, which included the Arab Academy of Audiology, IMPACT Foundation, CBM, Asia Pacific Federation of Hard of Hearing and Deafened, Worldwide Hearing, , Hearing Conservation Council, International Centre for Evidence on Disability, International Society of Audiology, American Academy of Otolaryngology and Global Coalition for Hearing Health also participated in the workshop.

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