



Remote tobacco cessation services in Jordan

The COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent lockdown measures disrupted access to tobacco cessation services provided through traditional clinics. To address this issue, the Ministry of Health collaborated with the Ministry of Digital Economy and Entrepreneurship and the National Call Center to establish a helpline for remote tobacco cessation services, catering to both Jordanians and refugees. Priority was given to people living with NCDs, adults aged 60 and above, and healthcare workers involved in the COVID-19 response. Through this helpline, these groups and others received free consultations and medications.

Furthermore, the Ministry of Health of Jordan received its first-ever donation of nicotine replacement therapy from Johnson & Johnson Consumer Health, facilitated by the Access Initiative for Quitting Tobacco. This collaboration, supported by WHO, the UN Interagency Task Force on NCD Prevention and Control, PATH and the Coalition for Access to NCD Medicines and Products, aims to support thousands of Jordanians and refugees in their smoking cessation

efforts during and beyond the COVID-19 pandemic. Despite the closure of face-to-face clinics, these initiatives have enabled Jordan to mitigate the impact of the lockdown and continue providing tobacco cessation services.

According to the national NCD survey conducted in 2019 (STEPS Survey), approximately 50% of adult smokers in Jordan attempted to quit smoking in the past year, yet only a small percentage had access to the necessary tools for successful cessation.

Additionally, the Ministry of Health, in collaboration with its partners, is working on expanding tobacco cessation services within primary healthcare settings. Moreover, Jordan has adopted Florence, WHO's virtual health worker, designed to assist the world's tobacco users in quitting. Utilizing artificial intelligence, Florence dispels misconceptions about COVID-19 and smoking while helping individuals create personalized quit plans.

Jordan is actively scaling up these interventions and fostering collaborations to explore innovative technological approaches to combat the escalating tobacco consumption problem in the country.

Mental health hotlines in Jordan

The lockdown measures implemented in response to COVID-19 significantly disrupted the provision of health services, including mental health support, in Jordan. To ensure the continuity of these essential services, telemedicine and mobile health approaches were adopted. This enabled the Ministry of Health to deliver consultations and medications to thousands of people in need during the lockdown period. Notably, two COVID-19 mental health hotlines were established to cater to the growing demand for mental health services.

The first hotline was a collaborative effort between the Ministry of Health, the Jordanian Association of Psychiatrists and the International Medical Corps. It facilitated the delivery of psychiatric medications through the support of WHO and the involvement of volunteer doctors.

The second hotline was established by the Jordanian Clinical Psychologists Association, offering specialized mental health and psychosocial support services provided by expert clinical psychologists.

Presently, the Ministry of Health is actively training more healthcare providers in mental health interventions to meet the increasing demand for mental health and psychosocial support during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. Additionally, they are working in partnership with various stakeholders, including the media, to raise awareness about mental health issues and reduce the stigma surrounding them.

Utilization of a web-based tool to enhance accessibility to NCD medications in Jordan

The COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent lockdown measures severely affected people's ability to access their NCD medications. To address this issue, the Ministry of Health collaborated with the Center for Strategic Studies at the University of Jordan, with support from the WHO Jordan Country Office and the Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean. Together, they conducted an assessment using a web-based tool to evaluate the impact of the lockdown on the accessibility of NCD medications for Ministry of Health beneficiaries.

Through this assessment, individuals who reported being unable to receive their medications due to the lockdown were identified, and the Ministry of Health promptly contacted them. Efforts were made to ensure that their medications were delivered to their homes. The assessment findings played a crucial role in guiding the proposal of interventions aimed at improving medication access. These interventions included establishing helplines for patients to seek assistance from the healthcare system and arranging for home delivery of medications and healthcare services to ensure timely access.

Furthermore, the Ministry of Health updated the digital records of NCD patients within its healthcare centers, enabling smoother communication with them in the future. Currently, Jordan is exploring the utilization of telemedicine and mobile health approaches to provide essential healthcare services, in addition to the home delivery of NCD medications.

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