

Recap of the First Day of Workshop

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**WHO EMRO COVID-19 Vaccine Effectiveness Study;
Status Update and Important Considerations
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Overview

1. EM Regional COVID-19 VE Study: *Status Update*
2. EM Regional COVID-19 VE Network: *Challenges and the Way Forward*
3. Conducting COVID-19 VE Studies: *What Next for Policy-making?*
4. Role of NITAGs in COVID-19 VE Studies in the Region
5. Current COVID-19 VE Data and Global Guidance on Conducting VE Studies
6. Antibody Testing for SARS-CoV-2 and Use in VE Studies

EM Regional COVID-19 VE Study: *Status Update*

Main activities

- Enhancing processes and structures
 - *COVID-19 VE Study Dashboard*
 - *Regional COVID-19 VE technical team*
 - *Regional ethical clearance*
 - *Data entry platform in REDCap*
- Building national technical capacity in the Region
 - *General vs specific capacity-building programs*

Participating countries and study designs

EM Regional COVID-19 VE Network: *Challenges and the Way Forward*

- Overall challenges
 - Common challenges encountered in COVID-19 VE studies
 - General challenges of a Regional COVID-19 VE Study
- Country-specific challenges in the EM Regional COVID-19 VE Study
- The way forward
 - strategies to address and overcome challenges

Conducting COVID-19 VE Studies: *What Next for Policy-making?*

- **Framework** for improving national institutional capacity for use of evidence in health policy-making
- EMR Countries committed to the integrated multi-concept approach for the institutionalization of **evidence-informed policy-making** for health



Role of National Immunization Technical Advisory Group (NITAG) in COVID-19 VE Studies in the Region

- NITAG has a **technical advisory role** on topics related to vaccines and immunizations
- They make evidence-based and independent decisions and share their **recommendations** with the **MoH**
- They are not involved in implementation, supervision, coordination and licensing
- The structure, functioning, considerations and processes of the NITAG had to be adjusted due to the COVID-19 pandemic
- NITAGs can recommend COVID-19 VE studies, review proposals and use findings to guide and update existing policies on COVID-19 vaccination***

Current COVID-19 VE Data and Global Guidance on Conducting VE Studies

The **most recent guidelines** by the WHO for **evaluation of COVID-19 vaccine effectiveness** in a changing landscape of epidemiology and epidemiology (3 October 2022)

- Waning occurs against BA4/5, especially infection
- Boosters restore VE against BA4/5
- Vaccines protect against infection (for a few months) and severe disease (for many months)
- Neutralization shows slight decrease compared to BA1
- Data suggests similar or some decrease in VE for BA4/5 compared to BA1

Antibody Testing for SARS-CoV-2 and Use in VE Studies

- **Serological tests** for SARS-CoV-2 have multiple indirect antigen targets
- **Immune responses** to SARS-CoV-2 infection are heterogeneous
- **Assay performance varies** with products, populations, and timing of sample collection
- **Correlates of protection** for COVID-19 vaccines are still being investigated
- **Serological tests** can be used in VE studies to investigate **hybrid immunity**
- Feasibility needs to be assessed in light of **vaccine products** and **population seroprevalence**

Resources

- All presentations and slides from capacity-building trainings will be posted on the EDP website: <https://www.emro.who.int/evidence-data-to-policy/covid-19-initiatives/index.html>
- The most recent updates by the WHO for “Evaluation of COVID-19 Vaccine Effectiveness” can be accessed via: <https://apps.who.int/iris/handle/10665/363344>