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The Eastern Mediterranean Health Journal examines a diverse number of topics in this issue that underpin public health-related activities in the Eastern Mediterranean Region (EMR), including research methods, communicable disease prevention, drug administration, and palliative care. In fact, the EMR continues to have some of the most pressing public health challenges brought about by social conflict and health systems degradation, exacerbated by natural disasters, including desertification, floods, earthquakes, and soil erosion.

The issue of non-adherence to medication schedules by patients is a topic that receives relatively little attention, yet its observation highlights the added healthcare costs through poor clinical outcomes and higher hospitalization rates. An example of non-compliance with prescribed medication is examined in the article “Adherence to levothyroxine among patients with hypothyroidism in Lebanon” (1), with particular relevance to the growing number of cases of thyroid-related pathologies in the Region. Still, if patients are failing to follow prescriptions from their physicians diligently, then this is not helped by irrational prescription of antibiotics by some physicians, which may result in antibiotic resistance, an issue examined in the article “Practice implications of an antimicrobial stewardship intervention in a tertiary care teach hospital, Qatar” (2).

The article “Agenda setting analysis for maternal mortality reduction: exploring influential factors using Kingdon’s Stream Model” (3) is a comparative study that analysed the agenda setting process in nine successful countries that achieved MDG 5, looking at similarities and differences in the agenda setting process, and concluded that political stability and commitment

are core to its success. Continuing the theme of maternal (and paediatric) mortality is the article “Human development index, maternal mortality rate and under 5 years mortality rate in West Asian countries, 1980–2010: an ecological study” (4), which covers a wider geographic region and compares indices over a 30-year period.

Public health and environmental factors are examined from two points of view in this issue; first, a therapeutic approach to wheezing among pre-school children through possible benefits of vitamin D supplements, as outlined in the article “Serum 25-hydroxyvitamin D status and wheezing in pre-school children, Kuwait” (5). Second, the implementation of proper waste management practices in hospitals to prevent landfill hazards to local populations, is the focus of the article entitled: “Field lessons in surveying healthcare waste management activities in Pakistan” (6).

Finally, the importance of effective nursing practices is addressed through adaptive research methods using Arabic data collection tools, as described in the article “The translation and cultural adaptation validity of the Actual Scope of Practice Questionnaire” (7). The theme of nursing and effective geriatric palliative care is continued in the article “Pain characteristics of older residents in Iranian nursing homes” (8), where the importance of pain management strategies to improve quality of life in older persons is emphasized.

Looking forward, the April issue of the Eastern Mediterranean Health Journal will examine the controversial issue of female genital mutilation in Sudan, gender-based violence in India, tackling communicable diseases as part of disaster management in the Islamic Republic of Iran, and disease screening of migrants arriving in Europe, among other issues of public health interest.

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