



25 November 2022 — The WHO EMRO held its third capacity-building workshop for COVID-19 vaccine effectiveness studies with a focus on updated guidelines and recommendations in designing and implementing these studies for researchers and health experts.

On 17 and 24 November 2022 the WHO Eastern Mediterranean Regional Office conducted the third series of the capacity-building workshop for “COVID-19 Vaccine Effectiveness Studies; Status Update and Important Considerations”. The two-day interactive workshop was held virtually and attended by more than 40 participants from 16 countries, including members from the Regional COVID-19 Vaccine Effectiveness Network as well as relevant health authorities / experts from the ministries of health, and WHO country offices.

The workshop was inaugurated by Dr. Arash Rashidian, the Director of Science, Information and Dissemination at the WHO EMRO. Presenters and speakers – who were among experts at the WHO, Epiconcept consultants and renowned investigators in this field – covered key topics; including recent updates and developments for evaluation of COVID-19 vaccine effectiveness,

common challenges encountered in designing and implementing such studies and strategies for addressing them. Successful studies from countries in the EM Region (namely, Qatar) as well as other WHO Regional studies (WHO Europe) were presented, emphasizing strengths, limitations and important findings from their studies.

Presentations on both days were followed with questions and answers where panelists addressed technical issues raised by the participants. Important topics discussed included the reliability for using rapid diagnostic tests for identifying positive COVID-19 cases instead of PCR, the significance of serology testing and antibody levels in VE evaluation, as well as the value of genetic sequencing for positive COVID-19 cases while considering emergence of new SARS-CoV-2 variants. The workshop also provided an opportunity for researchers to share their individual experiences and perspectives on priority topics with the participants.

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