

Event

Regional Meeting of WHO Collaborating Centers for Mental Health in the Eastern Mediterranean Region

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World Health Organization Collaborating Centers are affiliated to academic organizations collaborating with WHO regional offices to support the WHO's policies and plans at national, regional and global levels in different disciplines.¹ Moving from "bilateral relations" toward "multilateral networks" is a new paradigm of relationship among WHOCCs, introduced by the Executive Board of WHO in January 2000. This idea² fosters the WHOCCs to strengthen their national and international capacity for training, research and collaboration for health development.

Among 48 WHOCCs in the Eastern Mediterranean Region, 16 are located in Iran, where a joint meeting convened in June 2014 with the aim of understanding the terms of reference and potentials of each center.³

Among all members in the Eastern Mediterranean Region, three collaborating centers for mental health are located in Morocco, Iran and Pakistan. Regarding the new paradigm of collaboration, this meeting has been designed and has brought together WHOCCs for mental health of the EMR to collaborate on interesting and common fields in line with regional priorities. This two-day meeting, supported by the WHO/EMRO, was

arranged by the School of Behavioral Sciences & Mental Health of Iran University of Medical Sciences in September 2015. The objectives of the meeting were:

- To present plans of work, achievements and future directions by each center.
- To align its plans of work with global and regional priorities
- To set up joint collaborative projects and activities in the areas of capacity building, as well as service development
- To identify possibilities of submitting joint research proposals for funding on priority areas.

This meeting was held to enhance efficient collaboration among WHOCCs of EMRO and actualizing their full potential and active collaboration. There was active collaboration among all agents of Pakistan, Morocco and Iran during this meeting and after the presentations, in addition to active group discussions, the participants decided to plan for the way forward.

Planning for the way forward: Agreement on joint programs

The following areas were emphasized by the three centers for joint collaboration:

1. Suicide prevention and registration program.
 - Responsible organization: WHOCC for mental health in Iran.
2. Substance abuse prevention and treatment program.
 - Responsible organization: WHOCC for mental health in Morocco
3. Early intervention in disaster (man-made and natural).
 - Responsible organization: WHOCC for mental health in Pakistan.

All these proposed subjects should be planned by each assigned center to indicate:

- Providing the proposal
- Helping to contextualize the provided proposal for each center
- Holding required training courses and workshops for the professional/health workers of each center
- Building required capacities in each center
- Supervising the implementation of the planned program in each center
- Providing required documents and articles for the region

Follow up meetings for further collaboration should be arranged, annually/biannually which can be used to keep up with the progress and share the findings among the mentioned countries.

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All countries of the region will be informed of the proceedings of the meetings through the WHO/EMRO headquarters.

References

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Figure 1. A, B) Regional meeting of WHO Collaborating Centers