

Report of the IPA Immunization Co Chair Najwa Khuri-Bulos

**Second Vaccination for the Next Decade in the Arab World Meeting
and
Second Arab Pediatric Infectious Disease Meeting**

5-8 May 2009
La Royale Hotel, Amman

The Second "Vaccination for the Next Decade in the Arab World" meeting took place in Amman on May 6, 2009. This meeting was concurrently held with the 17th Union of Arab Pediatricians meeting and the Gastroenterology and the Neonatal subspecialty meetings. This "Vaccination" meeting was organized by the Arab Pediatric Infectious Disease Society in Collaboration with the WHO EMRO office, the CDC Atlanta, The Sabin Vaccine Institute, the Johns Hopkins School of Public Health, Harvard School of Public Health and The Jordan Ministry of Health. This meeting was the first of a three day meeting on Pediatric Infectious Disease. The general Pediatric infectious disease meeting took place in the last two days.

During the one day meeting on immunization, review of the First vaccination for the coming decade in the Arab World meeting was made. That first meeting also took place in Amman Jordan on December 9-11, 2007 and was organized with the help of NESI, the CDC and the WHO EMRO region. Her Majesty Queen Rania of Jordan attended part of the meeting and participated actively in the discussions and formulating the recommendations. During that meeting review of the status of vaccination in Arab countries was presented. It was noted that while many Arab countries were on

track regarding introduction of new vaccines and improvement of their vaccination program (the rich Arab states supporting introduction of new vaccines, the very poor being GAVI eligible) many of the middle income group countries, which includes up to 50% of the total Arab population are not receiving the protection they need. The recommendations were later presented by Dr. Gezairi, the regional director of the WHO EMRO office to the Ministers of Health in the Arab countries meeting which took place in March 2008 in Sharm Al Sheikh. A call was made for regional collaboration in order to safeguard the health of all children in the region and help the Arab countries achieve the MDG goals by giving priority to the introduction of the new vaccines to all Arab children regardless of economic status or country of residence.

Since that first meeting, evidence has been accumulating about the burden of disease in our region regarding both pneumonia and meningitis as well as diarrheal disease and rotavirus infections. Surveillance has indicated that about 1,100,000 children in our region develop acute respiratory illness 50,000 of whom die. Half of these are accounted for by the pneumococcus and hemophilus influenza, both of which are easily controlled by vaccination. Many studies have also indicated the importance of rotavirus in the aetiology of severe gastroenteritis among hospitalized children. In the different studies this virus accounted from 30-45% of such cases. These two infections and disease burden were reviewed by Drs. Rana Hajjeh and Umesh Parashar from the Centers for Disease Control.

The importance of vaccines in the prevention of disease and mortality in our region were reviewed by Dr. Mahendra Sheth, the regional medical advisor for UNICEF. Dr. Mahendra also reviewed the importance of nutrition and its interaction with infectious disease increased morbidity and mortality. Dr. Louis Cooper past president of the AAP reviewed the important role of the paediatrician and Pediatric associations in introduction of vaccines to the community of children.

In relation to the gaps in vaccine introduction between the rich and the middle income countries an up to date review was presented by DR. Mohsni from the WHO EMRO office. Several suggestions were made about bridging this gap and the example of other regions was reviewed by DR. Ciro De Quadros from the Sabin Institute and DR. Miloud Kaddar from the WHO Headquarters in Geneva. It was suggested that similar group procurement of vaccines should be encouraged within the region in order to help bridge this widening gap.

Finally the value of vaccination was presented by DR. David Bloom from Harvard school of public health. DR. Bloom presented compelling evidence indicating the economic growth in countries that did invest in child vaccination as a promoter to health and economic growth in the different regions of the world.

In order to bring the issue of vaccination to the decision makers, the Jordan Minister of Health was invited to participate. In addition the medical subcommittee in the lower and upper houses of parliament were invited to attend the final policy making sessions.

The meeting finished with a “Call to Action” to be presented to all decision makers as well as Arab Pediatricians and Arab paediatric societies to work towards this goal of improving access to vaccines in all Arab countries. This call to action was endorsed by the Union of Arab Pediatricians, The IPA and the Arab Society of Pediatric Infectious Disease. A copy of this call to action is attached to this report. DR. Chok Wan, the president of the IPA was in attendance of this meeting and also endorsed the call to action for introducing new vaccines. It is the intention of the organizers, the Arab Pediatric Infectious Disease Society and the Union of Arab Pediatricians to pursue this subject further by emphasising advocacy among the different Pediatric societies, the decision makers and the individual Pediatricians.

During the last two days several subjects about clinical issues in infectious disease were reviewed. A special session on “Swine flu” was also held.

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