



التحالف الإقليمي للأمراض غير السارية - إقليم شرق المتوسط
Eastern Mediterranean NCDA

PRESS RELEASE

New Data-driven Map of the MENA Region Shows Urgent Need for Action on Cervical Cancer

TUNIS, 4 MARCH 2019 - A new [interactive map](#) launched today, on International HPV Awareness Day, **shows the growing burden of HPV and cervical cancer in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region**. Created by the MENA Coalition for HPV Elimination and the Tunisian Center for Public Health, a member of the Eastern Mediterranean Non-communicable Disease Alliance, this map serves as a database to inform and influence policymakers in the region to step up action around these preventable diseases, which kill thousands of women each year.

According to the latest data from the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC), published in [Global Cancer Observatory](#), in 2018, over 7,600 women in the MENA [region](#) died from cervical cancer, caused by HPV. Many others died due to other HPV-related cancers, including vaginal, vulvar, penile, anal, mouth and throat cancers.

IARC projections show that if decisive action is not taken at the national and regional levels, annual deaths due to cervical cancer alone will double across the MENA region by 2040, reaching almost 16,000 deaths per year.

“Future policy interventions to lift the burden of HPV and save lives must be informed by a strong understanding of disease prevalence data and the latest research on cost-effective best practices,” said Dr. Shible Sahbani, United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) Regional Reproductive Health Advisor for Arab States. “This new map is an invaluable tool to inform future HPV control efforts in the region and ensure evidence-based policies and programs.”

In addition to illustrating cervical cancer rates across the region, this new resource also highlights the status of HPV vaccine implementation at the national level and includes country profile pages with the latest news and publications on HPV and cervical cancer.



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“Data Science and Digital Innovation are becoming essential tools in Global Health. This map is the first ever digital platform that integrates multiple data sources about HPV vaccination and cervical cancer burdens in countries across the MENA region,” said Dr. Melek Somai, Co-Founder and President of the Tunisian Center for Public Health. “It is already being used by policymakers, non-profits and international organisations to advocate for a comprehensive and evidence-based approach to eliminate HPV and cervical cancer in the region.”

In response to [the call our alliance made last year](#), Friends of Cancer Patients convened the first regional forum on HPV and cervical cancer prevention held in Sharjah, UAE on 31 January 2019. At the forum, more than 90 leaders and experts from 40 institutions across the region also expressed their commitment to HPV and cervical cancer prevention through the [Sharjah Declaration on Cervical Cancer 3x3](#), championed by Friends of Cancer Patients and UNFPA Arab States Regional Office.

"We need more data and research to support action against HPV and cervical cancer at the national and regional levels," said Dr. Ibtihal Fadhil, Founder and Chair of Eastern Mediterranean Non-communicable Disease Alliance. "Across the region, stepping up preventative efforts using a comprehensive approach is key to eliminating cervical cancer."

Libya and the UAE are leading the way on HPV vaccine implementation, with the UAE Ministry of Health and Prevention's recent [announcement](#) that the vaccine will be rolled out nationwide starting in March 2019. To stop future unnecessary deaths across the entire MENA region, countries must increase their commitments to tackle HPV and related preventable diseases, in line with efforts by Libya and the UAE. This new map is key to encouraging leaders in the MENA region to take steps forward on this issue.

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About Eastern Mediterranean Non-Communicable Diseases Alliance (EM-NCDA)

EM-NCDA is a network of over 50 civil society organizations in 18 countries in the Eastern Mediterranean Region. Founded in 2017 by national federations and alliances from the Region including: The Gulf Federation for Cancer Control, The King Hussein Cancer Foundation, the Saudi NCD Alliance, the Jordan NCD Alliance, the Egypt NCD Alliance, the UAE's Friends of



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Cancer Patients, the Tunisian Center for Public Health, Lebanon's Children's Cancer Center, Pakistan's Coalition for Tobacco Control, and NCD Alliance - Pakistan.

These organizations came together in recognition of the burden and impact of NCDs and their main risk factors. Working together with local partners, governments, WHO and other relevant UN agencies will enhance the integration of NCD's agenda and provide a regional platform for amplifying the voices of national and regional civil society organizations.

About the MENA Coalition for HPV Elimination:

The [MENA Coalition for HPV Elimination](#) is an initiative of the [Tunisian Center for Public Health](#) that brings together a network of academic, medical, government, media and civil society leaders to step up the fight against HPV and related diseases, including cervical cancer, in the Middle East and North Africa region. We aim to strengthen cooperation and partnership among national organizations involved in human rights and health promotion for women, adolescents and vulnerable populations and to foster dialogue on HPV and cervical cancer. We also work to drive momentum around the implementation of national strategies for the detection and management of cervical cancer and the implementation of HPV vaccination as part of national immunization programs.

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/MENAHPVCoalition>

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