

Public Health Workforce Development: Challenges and Opportunities

November 23, 2023

Moderated by Dr. Muhannad Sulaiman Aloraini, Public Health Academy Director at the [Saudi Arabia Public Health Authority](#) and Chair of the Asian Regional Network, the webinar held on November 23, 2023, highlighted the current challenges and opportunities in the public health workforce development process, in terms of training, competency frameworks, workforce roadmap and volunteering. The session offered presentations of panelists from [China CDC](#), [Jordan CDC](#), the [WHO collaboration Centre for Public Health Education & Training](#), the [Eastern Mediterranean Public Health Network \(EMPHNET\)](#), and the Community Medicine Council of the Arab Board of Health Specializations.

Panelists:

- Prof. Salman Rawaf, Director of the WHO Collaboration Centre for Public Health Education & Training, Imperial College London, United Kingdom
- H.E. Dr. Mohammad Alyahya, Secretary General, Jordan CDC
- Pr. Elsheikh Bader, Chairperson Community Medicine Council of the [Arab Board of Health Specializations](#) and WHO Health Workforce Consultant, United Arab Emirates
- Dr. Haitham Bashier, [International Academy of Public Health](#), EMPHNET, Jordan
- Dr. Liao Kaiju, Associate Researcher from the [Office of Education and Training](#), China CDC

The Wider Health Workforce

By Prof. Salman Rawaf, Director of the WHO Collaboration Centre for Public Health Education & Training, Imperial College London, United Kingdom

Prof. Salman Rawaf categorized the public health workforce into three groups: highly specialized individuals, public health practitioners, and the wider public health workforce, the latter constituting the majority. Prof. Rawaf highlighted the impact of factors like attrition rates, shortages in healthcare professionals, and the evolving role of technology in reshaping public health. Among others, the speaker underscored the global challenge of decreasing fertility rates and stressed the need for increased investment in education and training for the wider public health workforce. The mismatch between education and employment is highlighted, with a call for specialized academies to bridge the gap. The changing landscape of public expectations, driven by increased access to information, is also noted, emphasizing the importance of continuous professional development and the role of governments in recognizing and registering public health practitioners.

Navigating the Generational Bridge in Public Health Taskforce in Jordan

By H.E. Dr. Mohammad Alyahya, Secretary General, Jordan CDC

H.E. Dr. Mohammad Alyahya, Secretary General at Jordan CDC, expressed delight in addressing the critical issue of public health workforce, emphasizing the challenges in workforce planning and implementation. In his presentation, H.E. Dr. Alyahya gave an overview of public health stakeholders in Jordan and professional development programs in public health before delving into the challenges facing the public health workforce in Jordan and the crucial need for knowledge transfer.

H.E. Dr. Alyahya addressed the experience gap between the old and new generations in public health in Jordan. Having worked for 1.5 years at JCDC, established after the COVID-19 pandemic, he highlighted the diverse stakeholders involved in public health in Jordan, including those outside the health sector. The presentation discusses professional development programs, challenges facing the public health workforce in Jordan, and the importance of knowledge transfer initiatives. Challenges include the absence of a comprehensive national plan, weakness in training for management and strategic planning, difficulty attracting new talent, high turnover rates, and an absence of structured legal frameworks. The speaker emphasized the need for continuous professional development, defined roles and responsibilities, and addressing gaps in education and training. The Jordan CDC is focusing on knowledge transfer initiatives to bridge the generational gap, with efforts in recruitment, training, collaboration, mapping studies, and the establishment of a Public Health Training Centre. Barriers to effective communication across generations, power dynamics, perception of expertise, adaptability challenges, and training and skills gaps are also highlighted. The speaker concluded by acknowledging the challenges and the ongoing efforts to bridge the gap in the Jordan public health sector.

Professionalizing the Public Health Workforce through Competency Frameworks

By Pr. Elsheikh Bader, Chairperson Community Medicine Council of the Arab Board of Health Specializations and WHO Health Workforce Consultant, United Arab Emirates

Pr. Elsheikh Bader, Chairperson of the Community Medicine Council and a health workforce consultant, discussed the professionalization of the public health workforce through competency frameworks. He outlined the significance of competency-based education, emphasizing its logical approach to curriculum development by starting with job roles and required competencies. Competency frameworks are considered a higher function of competency-based education. They guide not only curricula but also labor markets, employment, regulation, and more. Pr. Bader connects competency frameworks to the concept of workforce professionalization, highlighting its characteristics such as education, workforce organization, credentialing, and ethical codes. He explored the role of competency frameworks in professionalizing the public health workforce, noting their contribution to education, workforce organization, licensing, and adherence to ethical codes. Challenges in establishing competency frameworks include conceptualization, the multi-professional nature of public health, change management, and resource limitations. Despite challenges, Pr. Bader saw prospects and opportunities, particularly amid the global momentum on public health workforce capacity, expansion of public health educational institutions, increased awareness of limitations, advances in public health sciences, and the potential of technology.

Challenges facing the professional training of the health workforce and examples of solutions from the Eastern Mediterranean Region (EMR)

By Dr. Haitham Bashier, International Academy of public health, EMPHNET, Jordan

Dr. Haitham Bashier, Team Leader of Workforce Curiosity and Public Health Emergency Management Centre at Infinite, addressed the challenges and solutions related to health workforce development and training programs in the region. He categorized challenges into three groups: quantity of workforce needed, quality and competencies, and working environment factors. Dr. Bashier emphasized the projected gap in the health workforce, the imbalance in production, brain drain, and the need for innovative approaches in education and training. He discussed the importance of public health institutes, research, and coordination to address these challenges. Dr. Bashier also highlights opportunities from global initiatives and emphasizes the need for smart coordination. He shares examples from Infinite's programs, such as the [Field Epidemiology Training Program \(FETP\)](#), which has been flexible and effective in training public health professionals. Dr. Bashier stressed the importance of linking academic programs to service provision and outlines future dimensions, including recognition of public health in FETP, new competencies, blended modalities, and expanding the target audience. He introduced the International Academy of Public Health launched in 2020 as a contribution to filling workforce gaps. Dr. Bashier concludes by emphasizing collaborative and coordinated efforts among partners and stakeholders for effective solutions.

Practice and prospect of public health workforce development in China CDC

By Dr. Liao Kaiju, Associate Researcher from the Office of Education and Training, China CDC

Dr. Liao Kaiju from the Office of Education and Training in China CDC discussed the practice and prospects of public health workforce development in China. He provided an overview of the public health workforce composition in China, emphasizing the increasing enrollment in public health and preventive medicine programs. Dr. Kaiju outlined the continuum of public health physician development, including undergraduate, postgraduate, and continuing medical education. He introduces the Graduate School of China CDC, established in 2014, which coordinates graduate education, continuing medical education, post-doc training, and the [Chinese Field Epidemiology Training Program \(CFETP\)](#). The CFETP includes three tiers: advanced, intermediate, and frontline, contributing to outbreak investigations and Rapid Response Team (RRT) deployment. Dr. Kaiju highlights international cooperation programs, standardized training for public health physicians, and the collaboration with WHO Road Map Team to improve public health professional training plans. He emphasized the need for diverse education backgrounds and pathways, collaboration between academic and public health practice, and the use of core competencies for professional education. Dr. Kaiju concluded by expressing the intention to expand collaboration with domestic and global partners for the continuous improvement of public health workforce development in China.

Questions and Answers:

In addressing a question of how competency frameworks should adapt to meet emerging public health challenges, the speakers emphasized the need for agility and dynamism within these frameworks. Competency frameworks were clarified as overarching guidance that sets concepts, with curricula developed based on them. Notably, flexibility is seen in the inclusion of competencies like agility, flexibility, and resilience to accommodate evolving dimensions. The importance of holistic competency frameworks that encompass technical, political, social, and cultural competencies was emphasized. The discussion delved into the challenges of knowledge transfer between generations within the workforce, highlighting gaps in language, methodology, and technology. Various innovative solutions were proposed to overcome funding shortages and enhance the development of public health workers, including bringing quality programs to local regions, utilizing technology for blended learning, and involving multiple stakeholders. The session concluded with a call for collaborative efforts to collectively address workforce challenges in the field of public health.