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PulseNet Middle East Communications Manager:
Dr. Tarek Al Sanouri
Central Public Health Laboratories,
Ministry of Health
11118 Amman, Jordan

PulseNet Middle East Newsletter

Welcome!

By Dr. Tarek Al Sanouri and Ms. Nikki Maxwell

Hello Everyone! Welcome to the first issue of the PulseNet Middle East Newsletter. At the consultation held in March, 2010 in Muscat, Oman, one of the main topics constantly discussed was the idea of stronger communication among members between consultation meetings. The purpose of this newsletter is just one way of keeping the conversation about PulseNet alive in the Middle East.

We are unsure of how many issues we will be sending out to members at this time, but we hope to continue sending you up to date information on activities, technical advice, and troubleshooting on a routine basis. As your interest in the PulseNet grows, we hope to provide even more information in the years to come! Thank you everyone for your support in making the PulseNet Middle East Newsletter becomes a reality!

How Can I Contact You?

There may be times when you may have question that another member may need to provide an answer to. Knowing who to contact is very important for sustain communication within a program. At the last PulseNet Middle East consultation in March, 2010, meeting planners wanted to make sure each member provided a point of contact for PulseNet within their country. We wanted to share these contacts with all members.

Bahrain

Dr. Bader Z. Hassan Baig, Chief, Public Health Laboratory
P. O. Box 42, Ministry of Health
Kingdom of Bahrain
BBaik@health.gov.bh ; Tel: ++ (973) 17279240; Fax ++ (973) 17279294

Mr. Hussain Ali Huhanna
Head, Food & Water Microbiology
Public Health Laboratory
P. O. Box 42, Ministry of Health
Kingdom of Bahrain
HHumood@health.gov.bh; Tel: ++(973) 17279289; Fax ++(973) 17279294

Iran

Dr Mohammad Rahbar
Department of Microbiology, Reference Laboratories of Iran
Bo-Ali Hospital, Damavand Avenue
P.O. Box 17115-365, Teheran, Iran
mhhf_rz@yahoo.com; Tel. +9891 21303143; Tel. +982 133798670 -1; Tel: +9821 3379 86 70; Fax: +9821 33 796 373

How Can I Contact You? (continued)

Jordan

Dr. Tarek Al Sanouri
Central Public Health Laboratories, Ministry of Health
11118 Amman, Jordan
tareksanouri@yahoo.com

Lebanon

Professor Ghassan M. Matar
Department of Microbiology and Immunology, Faculty of Medicine, American University of Beirut
Riad El-Solh Street
P.O.Box 11-0236, Beirut
E-mail: gmatar@aub.edu.lb; Tel.: 961-3-548456 ; Fax: 961-1-744464

Libya

Dr Abdulla Masood Bashein
Center for Control and Prevention of Infectious Diseases, Ministry of Health
P.O. Box 12168
E.mail: abashein_95@yahoo.com; Tel: +218 92 525 1160 ; Fax: + 218 21 48 00 301

Oman

Dr Suleiman Al-Busaidy
Director, Department of Laboratories, Ministry of Health
P.O. Box 393, Muscat 113
Busaidy8@omantel.net.om / mohdl@omantel.net.om ; Tel.: 968 247 05 943 / 968 247 05 740; Fax: 968 247 938 99

Dr Irshad Ahmed

Bacteriologist, Central Public Health Laboratory, Ministry of Health, Muscat 113
irshadahmed1@gmail.com; Tel.: 968 247 05 943 / 968 247 05 740; Fax: 968 247 938 99

Dr J. P. N. Singh

Bacteriologist, Central Public Health Laboratory, Ministry of Health, Muscat 113
jpnvet2001@yahoo.co.in; Tel.: +968 247 05 943 / 968 247 05 740; Fax: +968 247 938 99

Palestine

Dr. Asad Manasrah, Director of veterinary Laboratories

Mr Essa Ishtayeh

Laboratory technician, Central Lab, Ministry of Health
essaishtieh@yahoo.com; Tel: +972-2-298-8034

Ms Sawsan Sudqi Said

Laboratory technician, Ministry of Health
sawsan_said2004@yahoo.com; Tel.: + 972 22988034
Other important contacts for National PulseNet program in Palestine: PMD, Environmental Health Department, CPHL, Universities, Private Medical Labs.

Qatar

Dr.Sanjay Doiphode
Consultant &Head, Division of Clinical Microbiology
Hamad Medical Corporation, P.O.Box 3050, Doha, Qatar
sdoiphode@hmc.org.qa ; Tel: 009745563479

Dr. Wasan Al-Baker

Manager, Food Safety and Environmental Laboratory
Supreme Council of Health , Doha, Qatar

Mrs. Afrah Mohsin Al Keldi

Technologist in Charge
Central Food Laboratory Public Health Department, NHA, Doha, Qatar
aalkildi@sch.gov.qa ; Tel: 009744329718

Follow-Up: A chat at six months

Dr. Tarek Al-Sanouri, Ms. Myriam Morcos, and Ms. Nikki Maxwell

Approximately six months after the 4th PulseNet Middle East Consultation ended in March, 2010, Dr. Tarek Al Sanouri and Ms. Myriam Morcos, the PulseNet technical trainer for the region, provided a short list of questions to each member to see how PulseNet was progressing in each country. The following are some of the achievements members have made, along with the struggles members are working hard to overcome in the region.

Qatar

Dr. Sanjay Doiphode’s laboratory has been able to procure the necessary equipment to conduct PFGE in the lab. Although the economy has been an issue for many, Dr. Doiphode was able to obtain support for two persons to attend the next PulseNet Consultation meeting in 2011. With this great achievement, he still experiences some set-backs with a staff and reagent shortage. Dr. Doiphode still has determination to make PulseNet continue. ‘I haven’t given up [hope],’ he says. ‘...meetings with local stakeholders were conducted (three so far) and we are working on strategies and change of leadership, to expedite the proceedings.’

Palestine

Both Mr. Issa Shtayeh and Ms. Sawson Said attended the consultation in March 2010. They have been able to procure equipment for PFGE, supplies and the software analysis. As members of the Middle East Consortium for Infectious Disease Surveillance (MECIDS), they have received support as a PulseNet member in the region. MECIDS support has been able to provide support, but the hard work is what Issa Shtayeh and Sawson Said have committed themselves to working on. ‘As

promised so earlier in Oman,’ they write, ‘we did and still [run] PFGE gels for salmonella spp since July 2010, and these gels were submitted to NAMRU-3 and Oman for discussion.’ Although they faced some issues in the quality of the gel image they produced, they immediately contacted Myriam Morcos for solutions and suggestions. ‘This put the right back on track!’ they stated.

With the hard work they have accomplished, Palestine is very close to becoming a newly PulseNet certified member in the network. Good work!



Bahrain

Since the last consultation meeting, Dr. Bader Z. Hassan Baig, Chief of the Public Health Laboratory of Bahrain, has been able to acquire all required equipment for PulseNet activities and have ordered (and re-ordered) necessary reagents. Bahrain has also submitted five PFGE gels to both NAMRU 3 and Oman and received encouraging feedback. Bahrain has also been involved in discussions related to gel issues that took part in the first ever PulseNet Middle East web conference (using Go-To-Meeting online) in 2010. ‘Apart from that,’ stated Dr. Baig, ‘we have been in touch through e-mails with...Myriam and Dr. Irshad and Dr. Singh in Oman and we have been getting some very useful tips... Thank you all because I personally think that it helped us improve our work to a great extent.’ Along with the progress Bahrain has made thus far, they are also looking towards self-funding their microbiologist(s) for additional training at future PulseNet workshops organized by NAMRU3.

As for funding initiatives, although WHO was able to procure funding for the annual PulseNet Middle East consultation in March, 2011, Dr. Baig

stated, ‘Allocating funds for the meeting will not be a problem.’

Lebanon

Dr. Ghassan Matar, Professor in Faculty of Medicine with the Department of Microbiology and Immunology at the University of Beirut has been able to acquire all the necessary equipment, reagents and supplies. After submitting a number of gels to NAMRU3 for technical assistance and guidance and receiving training for the laboratory staff, Just as Palestine, Lebanon is on their way in becoming the next laboratory to be PulseNet certified in the Middle East. Congratulations to Dr. Matar and his staff!

Jordan

Dr. Tarek Al Sanouri, Head of the Central Public Laboratories in Jordan, has been very busy. Since the last consultation, two microbiologists from his lab have been trained, PulseNet standard operating procedures were set for PulseNet lab unit in Jordan, BioNumerics software analysis were upgraded to 6.5, and the lab is became PulseNet certified in the pathogens they stated as their priority pathogens: *Salmonella* and *Shigella*. Their accomplishments do not stop there! They began including PFGE in outbreak investigations by performing PFGE on *Shigella* isolates associated with an outbreak in the northwest region of Jordan, as well as providing assistance to their PulseNet colleagues, Palestine, by providing the necessary certification isolates .

We Want To Hear From You!

If your laboratory was not listed, we also want to know of the achievements, struggles, and barriers your laboratory is facing in developing PulseNet in your country. Members want to know what you are doing to gain more information and provide guidance on issues you may face. Please send your updates to Dr. Tarek Al-Sanouri at tareksanouri@yahoo.com. Thank you!

PulseNet TIPS

By Myriam Morcos

In order to make your lab a PulseNet certified and to establish your own surveillance system as well as exchange your data with the rest of the members, here are essential tips:

- Do as many gels as you can and analyze them.
 - Send the gels photos and the bundles to Ms. Myriam Morcos (myriam.morcos.eg@med.navy.mil) NAMRU-3 or CPHL, Oman for guidance.
 - The **S. Braendrup** standard (marker) bands (last doublet) in the gel needs to be one inch apart from the end of the gel.
 - Always use autoclaved water, reagents and glassware all the time.
 - Make sure the gel is not too hot when you pour it in the cast and give about 30m' to solidify (Don't leave it too long).
- ❖ Welcome to Egypt, Morocco and Kuwait to the Consultation and the training ☺
- ❖ For any technical questions please reach me at:
myriam.morcos.eg@med.navy.mil
or myriammorcos@yahoo.com

THANK YOU ☺

Upcoming Events

This area is dedicated to highlighting events that would be of interest to members of PulseNet Middle East. If you are aware of any meetings, conferences, projects, or funding opportunities that are occurring in the region, please send them to Dr. Tarek Al Sanouri to publish in the next newsletter. Thank you for your assistance.

27-28, March, 2011
Muscat Holiday Hotel
Muscat, Oman
6th Annual PulseNet Middle East Consultation

For more information, please contact Dr. Mohammad Youssef at youssefm@who.int.

29, March, 2011
Central Public health Laboratories
2nd Regional PulseNet BioNumerics Workshop

Members will receive hands-on training on basic software analysis. For more information, please contact:

Nikki Maxwell at:

tmaxwell@cdc.gov ;
ddq6@cdc.gov

Myriam Morcos at:
myriam_morcos.eg@med.navy.mil