

WHO Thematic Platform for Health-EDRM Research Network (TPRN)

Participating research institutions:

Core group: WHO Headquarters (WHE, WKC) and

WHO Regional Offices (PAHO, AFRO, EMRO, EURO, SEARO, WPRO)

Co-Chairs: Professor Virginia Murray, Public Health England, and Professor Emily YY Chan,
The Chinese University of Hong Kong

Funding: US\$ 200,000

Funding Period: 2018 – 2020

Location of research: Global in scope

● Background

The growing recognition of health as a core dimension in disaster risk management has catalyzed the development of Health Emergency and Disaster Risk Management (Health-EDRM), a field which encompasses emergency and disaster medicine, disaster risk reduction, humanitarian response, community health resilience, and health system resilience. In response to the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030, WHO has established the “WHO Thematic Platform for Health EDRM Research Network” (TPRN) as a subgroup of the Thematic Platform for Health-EDRM. It aims to strengthen research and promote knowledge and evidence in Health-EDRM. The TPRN aligns with the World Health Organization’s 13th General Programme of Work 2019-23 (GPW13), which is a critical tool for WHO Member States to set and approve the priorities of the Organization, define the targets to be delivered, and to monitor their achievements. The GPW13 is structured around three strategic priorities, and one specifically addresses health emergencies and aims to build and sustain resilient health systems required to keep the world safe from epidemics and other health emergencies.

● Methods

The TPRN comprises the core group, participants, and the information-sharing network. The core group includes WHO staff at all levels and regions, the Secretariat (WHO Kobe Centre), and other external key stakeholders. The core group facilitates the development of TPRN and coordinates its activities.

The participants consist of global stakeholders who contribute to updating the knowledge and scientific evidence of H-EDRM through active participation in one or more thematic groups. The information sharing network expands the TPRN and includes members who will receive a periodical newsletter from the TPRN Secretariat with information of official WHO meetings, publications, research funding, and information updates from the TPRN. The WHO Kobe Centre has acted as the Secretariat of the TPRN since 2019.

● Results

The Terms of Reference of the TPRN (1), and its operational plan (2), were developed respectively in 2018 and 2019. Leading experts from the TPRN and other key partners have identified, through a meeting convened by the WHO Kobe Centre in 2018, five research priority areas: health data management; mental health and psychosocial support; addressing specific health needs of subpopulations; health workforce development; and research methods and ethics. A detailed description of the expert meeting and its findings were published in a series of papers (3-6), and on a project page on the WHO Kobe Centre website (7). In 2019, the WHO Kobe Centre launched the first call for proposals on Health-EDRM addressing the first four priority areas, while the WHO Guidance on Research Methods for H-EDRM currently underway specifically addresses the fifth research priority. WHO has also published the WHO Health Emergency and Disaster Risk Management Framework which maximize the contribution of the TPRN to research, policy and practice of Health-EDRM.

● Conclusions

The TPRN serves as an international, multi-stakeholder and inter-disciplinary platform to exchange information, share views and advise WHO about Health-EDRM research and evidence. It promotes partnerships among stakeholders to enhance the scientific and technical work on Health-EDRM, influence the international Health-EDRM research agenda and advocate greater health input within the wider disaster risk reduction community.

