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**Middle East Consortium on Infectious Disease Surveillance (MECIDS)  
Salmonella Identification Workshop  
7-10 March, 2005**

Ten Palestinian, Jordanian, and Israeli health professionals spent a week together learning new laboratory techniques in a salmonella identification workshop. This is the second course sponsored by MECIDS but the first to be held in the region. The goals of MECIDS are to improve the ability of nations in the Middle East to respond to disease outbreaks and to build trust among them. MECIDS is a project of Search for Common Ground, funded by the Nuclear Threat Initiative.

Four Palestinians, three Jordanians, and three Israelis with backgrounds in microbiology, laboratory science, and public health received hands-on training as well as lectures from specialists at the Jerusalem Central Laboratory of the Israeli Ministry of Health, which donated many hours of effort by its senior staff to put on the workshop.

All the workshop participants will have roles in the system that MECIDS is building to share data about foodborne disease outbreaks in the region. They included doctors, laboratory technicians from all three nations' ministries of health.

The four-day professional curriculum of the course provided each participant with hands-on experience and lectures on the following subjects:

- Primary plating of stool specimens for the detection of salmonella.
- Knowledge on how to perform PFGE (Pulse Field Gel Electrophoresis).
- New techniques for phage typing of salmonella.
- Use of the VITEK machine, which offers new methods for identification and antibiotic resistance detection
- Techniques for antibiotic resistance tests

Each ministry of health sent three participants to this workshop. The facilitators of the salmonella identification workshop were specialists at the Jerusalem Central Laboratory of the Israeli Ministry of Health, who presented lectures and guided participants through hands-on exercises designed to teach key concepts in the identification of salmonella, such as primary plating, new laboratory techniques on identification and phage typing, and the introduction to new machines for identification of salmonella.

At the end of the workshop participants expressed their needs for future workshops to enhance their capabilities for the prevention and control of foodborne diseases, as well as their immediate needs in for laboratory supplies and equipment to bring them up to the appropriate level of functioning. In particular, the Jordanian and Palestinian participants identified a need for standard pathogen strains and antisera for the full spectrum of salmonella serotypes. The Jerusalem Central Laboratory of the Israeli Ministry of Health met some of those needs on the

spot by providing the Palestinian and Jordanian participants with three sets of antisera for the proper diagnosis of salmonella.

In addition, the participants brainstormed suggestions for next steps for the MECIDS projects. Their suggestions included the following:

- A workshop on antibiotic resistance
- A workshop on meningitis
- Visits to the West Bank, Gaza, and Jordan Laboratories
- Creating a joint collection of salmonella strains
- Running a proficiency test in all the participating laboratories
- More training on PFGE
- More training on phage typing

Finally, three participants—one from each nation—met together to agree on a standardized protocol for monitoring and responding to a salmonella outbreak.

In the future, MECIDS will sponsor additional trainings and meetings in order to teach specific skills in depth and to maintain the ties among this cohort of Middle Eastern health professionals.

**In their own words:**

*I hope that our countries will do the same as we did.*

--Israeli Ministry of Health Laboratory Specialist

*Diseases do not know border; I have a great vision of collaboration for the future.*

--Jordanian Physician

*We are all cooperative genotypes.*

--Palestinian Laboratory Technician

*Might Salmonella bring Salam to the region?*

--Israeli Ministry of Health Laboratory Specialist

*I am very glad that I have met and worked with the Israelis.*

--Palestinian Laboratory Technician

*I am very happy to have shared ideas, and have gained a great deal of knowledge.*

--Palestinian Laboratory Technician

*I am very happy to be exposed to new experiences and am hoping for future collaboration.*

--Palestinian Physician