R4HSSS

Research for Health System Strengthening in Syria

أبحاث لتقوية النظام الصحي في سوريا

NEWSLETTER NOVEMBER 2023

November 29th 2023

*Click on pdf to access links

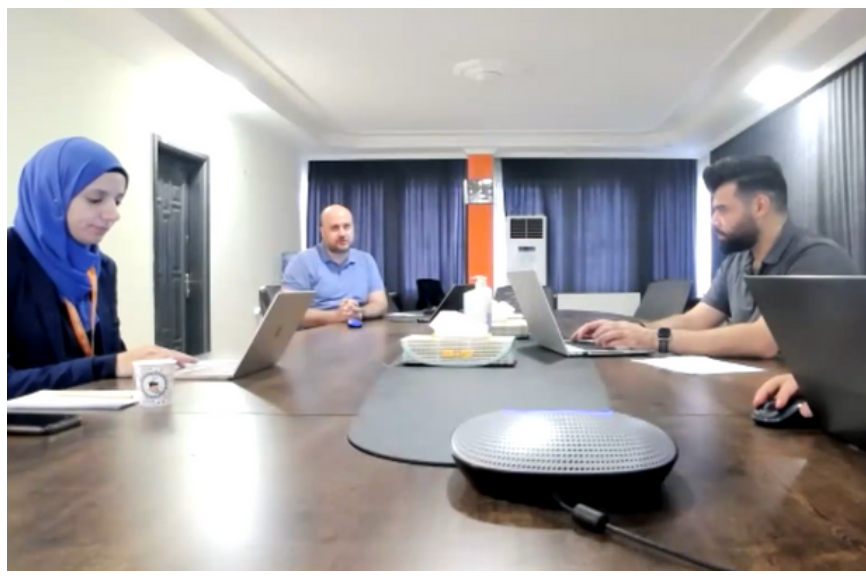
UOSSM - Abdominal Ultrasound Course

The Syrian Board of Medical Specialties (SBOMS) recently concluded a five-day abdominal ultrasound course attended by 21 resident doctors in internal medicine. The course aimed to impart skills in various ultrasound techniques, including eco testing, abdominal aortic examination, eco scan for bruising cases, chest and lung eco examination, cardiac eco examination, examination of the polycarbonate system, and examination of gallbladder and bile methods of eco. The initiative is part of a broader effort to address the needs of resident doctors, with plans to conduct additional courses for residents in all specialties under the R4HSSS project.

Academic Writing Training

The Academic Writing training, took place in Gaziantep and online in September, organised by the KCL team with additional funding secured by Dr. Nassim El Achi through the NIHR Global Health Research Cohort Academic Development Award. These sessions focused on key aspects of research paper writing, providing a conducive environment for collaborative work and enhancing research writing skills and dissemination.

Executive Board Meeting - 7th September



In the September Executive Board hybrid meeting, several workstreams provided update, highlighting significant progress in the Health Information System (HIS) workstream, focusing on a population-based health information system framework, publications, and training; research capacity strengthening and coordination within the Medical Education workstream; ongoing and upcoming mental health research projects; health governance, and plans for assessing governance in conflict-affected areas. The next meeting will be in May 2024.

UOSSM - Neonatal Intensive Care Diploma & Mechanical Ventilation

On October 15, 2023, the examinations for the second semester of the Neonatal Intensive Care Diploma (NICU) were initiated as part of R4HSSS. The exams involved the participation of 50 students. This specialised diploma initiative was developed to benefit healthcare professionals employed in the intensive care units of children's hospitals. The program, spanning eight months, covered both theoretical knowledge and practical training in neonatal intensive care techniques.

The Syrian Board of Medical Specialties (SBOMS) recently concluded a two-day Mechanical Ventilation course for ten resident doctors in Internal Medicine. The first day covered theoretical aspects, including oxygen therapy principles, breath physiology, and machine ventilation patterns. The second day focused on practical training, encompassing ventilator component identification, circuit installation, and control of ventilator settings. Trainees, guided by a supervisor, also toured patients in the intensive care unit.

News

R4HSSS Scholarship Student Dr. Okba Doghim's Master's Completion

Congratulations to R4HSSS Scholarship Awardee Dr. Okba Doghim for completing his Master's programme in Sexual and Reproductive Medicine at the University of South Wales .

"My journey has been nothing short of transformative. Through the invaluable support of an R4HSSS scholarship, I embarked on a path that led me to a profound understanding of this critical field and equipped me with the tools to drive meaningful change in the northwest Syria humanitarian response.

The decision to study online, while juggling a full-time professional life, was no small feat. However, this journey allowed me to delve into the depths of sexual and reproductive health (SRH) like never before. The curriculum not only expanded my theoretical knowledge but also cultivated a deep sense of empathy and understanding for the issues faced by individuals in need of comprehensive SRH services.

One of the most rewarding aspects of this academic endeavor was the emphasis on research. I had the privilege to engage in a meaningful research project, broadening my horizons within the field.

I now serve as a consultant in Sexual and Reproductive Health & Gender-Based Violence (GBV) integration with the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA). This role not only allows me to apply the knowledge and skills I acquired during my studies but also to be a part of a global effort to make a difference. The integration of SRH and GBV is a critical dimension of the work, and I am proud to contribute to the holistic well-being of individuals and communities.

Additionally, I have taken on the role of Programs Director with SRD (Syria Relief & Development), an organisation dedicated to supporting Sexual and Reproductive Health programs in northwest Syria. This role gives me the chance to translate my education into action, directly impacting the lives of those who need it the most. It's a privilege to be a part of initiatives that seek to address SRH challenges in a region where such services are essential.

In closing, my master's journey in Sexual and Reproductive Medicine has been an educational odyssey filled with growth and transformation. I am deeply grateful for the opportunities provided by the R4HSSS scholarship, my dedicated mentors, and the online education platform that made it all possible. Armed with this knowledge and experience, I am committed to continuing my work in the field and making a lasting impact on the lives of individuals and communities in need.

The journey may have reached its academic conclusion, but the path of impact and positive change in the realm of Sexual and Reproductive Health is an ongoing and fulfilling endeavor." - Dr Okba Doghim

Women in Leadership: Health, Conflict, and Climate - 12th September 2023

From left to right: Emma Pencheon, Alicia Herbert, Dr Aleida Borges, Salma Daoud & Kristen Meagher

The R4HSSS program, Women in Global Health UK (WGHUK) and the Women Leaders in Health and Conflict (WLHC) initiative hosted a networking event 'Women in Leadership: Health, Conflict, and Climate' at Bush House, 8th Floor North Terrace, KCL. We brought together a diverse array of feminist organisations and networks with a focus on health, conflict, and climate issues. We explored and celebrated the vital role of women in leadership across these disciplines.

The event featured a compelling panel session with speakers representing academia, the UK government, and activist groups.

Panellists:

Salma Daoudi - Researcher and DPhil candidate in International Relations at the University of Oxford.

Alicia Herbert OBE - Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office Director for Education, Gender and Equalities and the UK's Special Envoy for Gender Equality.

Dr Aleida Borges - Research Fellow, King’s College London

Watch here

Nassim El-Achi

Dr Nassim El Achi (Research Associate) left the R4HSSS team in October 2023. Dr El Achi has now joined the Medical Research Council (MRC) as Programme Manager - Training and Careers. We thank Dr El Achi for her extensive contributions to R4HSSS in which she developed and led the Training and Capacity Building aspects of the programme, working collaboratively with all partners. Dr El Achi also led and contributed to a significant amount of research projects and publications, and mentored several early career researchers. Thank you again, Nassim, you will be missed by all the team!

Publications

Inoculating Cities, Volume II: Case Studies of the Urban Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic: Chapter 4: Pandemic governance and community mobilization in conflict: a case study of Idlib, Syria

Dr Preeti Patel, Dr Abdulkarim Ekzayez, Dr Munzer Alkhalil, and Dr Gemma Bowsher have co-authored Chapter 4 of the Inoculating Cities Volume 2 book, diving into Idlib, Syria's unique #COVID19 response amidst conflict and challenges.

Read here

Impact of armed conflict on health professionals' education and training in Syria: a systematic review (2023)

The aim of the publication is to provide an overview of the holistic impact of the armed conflict on medical education and health professionals' training (MEHPT) in Syria **Read here**

Health system governance assessment in protracted crisis settings: Northwest Syria (2023)

Post-government withdrawal in Northwest Syria, 'Central Bodies' were formed for planning and services, but governance rules may be underdeveloped. This research evaluates their effectiveness, addressing the urgent need for systematic strategic planning in protracted humanitarian settings.

Read here

Health aid displacement during a decade of conflict (2011–19) in Syria: an exploratory analysis (2023)

In Syria's complex conflict, health aid displacement may not align with domestic needs. Individual donors show slight displacement, but overall, donors prioritize the humanitarian sector over health. Urgent focus on health development aid is needed, adopting a nexus approach for aid effectiveness, and addressing local health needs in the protracted conflict..

Read here in English, **Read Key Findings here in Arabic**

Blogs

Humanitarian Response During the Syrian Earthquake: An Insider's Perspective - Dr. Mustafa Aledo

Photo: Members of the White Helmets leading search and rescue efforts following the earthquake in NWS (GOV.UK, 2023).

Mustafa Aledo sheds light on yria, plagued by a decade-long conflict, grapples with a weakened health system and reliance on humanitarian aid. A recent earthquake on February 6, 2023, intensified the crisis, claiming over 2,166 lives and causing widespread damage.

Call for Papers

BMC: International Journal for Equity in Health seeks submissions for their Collection on Health inequalities in MENA region. They welcome theoretical, review, & empirical works exploring health system disparities from various angles.

More info here

Deadline: 5th March 2024

BMC: Attacks on healthcare Conflict and Health is calling for submissions to our Collection on Attacks on Healthcare.

More info here

Deadline: 30th May 2024