

## النشرة الوبائية السعودية

تصدرها وزارة الصحة

الوكالة المساعدة للطب الوقائي وبرنامج الوبائيات المحلي  
المجلد الأول - العدد الثالث - شوال ١٤١٤هـ

### **A Hajj message from MOH**

Each year, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is honored to have millions of Muslims perform pilgrimage to Makkah, the Holy Mosque and the holy places at Mina, Arafat and Muzdalifa, and visit Madinah. Pilgrims come from many countries with their differing habits and lifestyles. Highly infectious diseases, such as meningitis and diarrheal diseases, are endemic in some of these countries. This massive influx of people from around the world occurs in a short period of time and in relatively small and well-defined areas -- conditions that can facilitate the spread of infectious diseases. For these reasons the Ministry of Health (MOH) is directing facilities and manpower during Hajj to provide preventive and curative services so that both residents and pilgrims are protected from imported diseases.

In the MOH, the preventive activities for Hajj continue all year, but they are especially active in the two months before Hajj and during Umrah seasons (especially during Ramadan). Also, the MOH is evaluating the effectiveness of the preventive measures it is taking. In this issue of the Saudi Epidemiology Bulletin you will read about some of the preventive measures taken and the evaluation of vaccination status for meningococcal meningitis in Makkah.

For Hajj the MOH is sending a team of more than 250 doctors, public health specialists, health inspectors, other technical personnel and administrators to support the preventive activities of the Makkah health directorate. They are divided into teams for outbreak investigation and environmental sanitation to work both in the hospitals and health centers and in the field at the sites of worship. Some trainees from the Field Epidemiology Training Program are also participating with these teams.

Health education is concentrated particularly on diseases and health problems common during Hajj, especially heat stroke, overcrowding, environmental sanitation and diarrhea. Pamphlets, posters and tapes are distributed to pilgrims in many languages. These measures are designed so that pilgrims can complete their religious duties and return home in good health, as well as protecting the Kingdom from any possible appearances of imported disease.

We wish you a peaceful, healthy Hajj season for 1414 Hejira.

– Dr. Yagob Al-Mazrou

Assistant Deputy Minister for Preventive Medicine

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