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Progress towards measles, rubella and congenital rubella syndrome elimination: Oman experience

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ABSTRACT

Oman has committed to the goal of eliminating measles, rubella and congenital rubella syndrome (CRS) by 2015 year. Elimination is defined as the absence of endemic measles and rubella transmission in a defined geographical area for ≥ 12 months in the presence of a well-performing surveillance system and for rubella without the occurrence of CRS cases associated with endemic transmission in the presence of high-quality surveillance system. Strategies to reach this goal included: a) achieving and maintenance high rates of vaccination coverage; b) syndromic surveillance programs to monitor fever and rash illness syndromes for effective detection of cases; c) and high-quality surveillance system, and sensitive for CRS. Measles and rubella was a leading cause of infant and child morbidity and mortality in Oman before the introduction of measles vaccine by 1975 and thereafter until 1994. With the introduction of a second dose of measles and first rubella vaccines in 1994, coverage for first and second doses of measles and rubella vaccines increased more than 95% in 1996 and has been sustained thereafter. A national measles and rubella immunization catch-up campaign targeting children ages 15 months to 18 years was conducted in 1994 that achieved 94% coverage. As a result, the incidence of measles and rubella have declined markedly in recent years, to ≤ 1 case per million persons in 2012 and to zero cases for measles and rubella in 2013. Similarly, no case of CRS has been notified since 2007. Oman has made significant progress toward measles and rubella elimination and has met the regional elimination goals. However, new challenges faced by Oman, for instance with increased globalization, has led to issues such as outbreaks from imported cases. Additional challenges still remain with regard to increasing identification and immunization of unvaccinated non-Omani workers and their families.

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