

Preparedness and response to COVID-19: scientific educational webinar in Ashgabat

On 2 July, as part of the UK Government's broader COVID-19 global response to help the authorities respond effectively to the pandemic and its negative impacts, British Embassy Ashgabat organised a scientific webinar on the prevention, preparedness and response to COVID-19 in Turkmenistan. The event was held at the International Scientific-Educational Centre of the Ministry of Healthcare and Medical Industry.

The event was held at the International Scientific-Educational Centre of the Ministry of Healthcare and Medical Industry

At this virtual roundtable event, a group of senior scientists and professors from the internationally renowned British universities, institutes and government agencies such as Public Health England (PHE), an executive agency of the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC), John Innes Centre, University of Cambridge, University of Birmingham, University of Manchester, University College London Hospitals (UCLH), Imperial College London and Royal College of Pathologists (RCPath) shared their ongoing efforts in the area of COVID-19 prevention and scientific research with the Turkmen medical workers, healthcare specialists and representatives of the Ministry of Healthcare and Medical Industry.

The speakers shared their expertise in dealing with some of the major challenges that the COVID-19 crisis has created across the world and the UK. The British scientists underlined the importance of basics such as hand hygiene, wearing masks in enclosed areas and public health measures to reduce risk. They also stressed that the COVID-19 tests had to be widely available and affordable to public.

During the webinar, presenters also talked about the basics of coronaviruses, their genetic history (when and where the virus outbreak started), their population genetic parameters and touched upon tracing sources of infection – what are they, what diseases do they cause and where do they come from. The discussion continued with talk about setting up diagnostics facilities for COVID-19, the applied methods and techniques for protecting medical workers and immune response to the virus. Finally, the speakers presented on a discussion of the strategic and operational challenges they have faced during this pandemic and described Polymerase chain reaction (PCR) testing for coronavirus detection.

Representatives from the Ministry of Healthcare and Medical Industry asked their British colleagues about the proceedings and outcomes of the most recent research in combating the pandemic and how they had managed the surge

in COVID-19 cases in the UK. They expressed appreciation for the information presented and praised the collective efforts and thoughts on best practice, adding that their staff found presentations very informative, interesting and educative.

Topic of COVID-19 is very new not just to Turkmenistan, but also to the whole world. Thus, the both sides agreed that this webinar was not meant to be a single event, but a starting point for the deepened coordination between the two countries to tackle the challenges of the pandemic by bringing us closer to resolving this important issue.