ISDS 2012 Conference Abstracts

Can Novel Flu Surveillance Be Conducted With Limited Resources?

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Objective

This project was organized to facilitate discussions on whether successful novel flu surveillance can be conducted by jurisdictions with limited resources. The discussions will focus on gathering opinions regarding the best combination of surveillance systems to quickly and efficiently identify the presence of influenza A (H3N2)v and other novel influenza viruses in circulation.

Introduction

The past decade has witnessed rapid development and implementation of numerous syndromic and other advanced surveillance systems to supplement traditional laboratory testing to identify the presence of novel influenza strains and track the impact on local populations. While much of the development and widespread implementation of these systems had been supported by public health preparedness funding, the loss of these monies has greatly constrained the ability of public health agencies to staff and maintain these systems. The periodic appearance of novel flu viruses, such as H3N2v, requires agencies to carefully choose which systems will provide the most cost-effective data to support their public health practice.

Methods

This project will be facilitated by an experienced public health practitioner who has conducted surveillance for a variety of disease agents. Additional public health practitioners are being recruited among members of the International Society for Disease Surveillance (ISDS) Public Health Practice Committee (PHPC) to contribute information on comparative approaches to cost effective surveillance. Questions were selected for discussion and responses will be collected from influenza surveillance coordinators using a web-based survey tool managed by ISDS staff on behalf of the PHPC. Survey responses and subsequent recommendations will be presented at a PHPC meeting.

Results

Initial questions selected for the survey tool and subsequent discussions include:

What surveillance systems does your agency use for conducting influenza surveillance?

Which surveillance systems require trained and experienced public health and informatics staff to maintain?

Is your agency having difficulties in recruiting and retaining trained surveillance staff?

Has influenza A (H3N2)v been identified in your state or jurisdiction?

Does your agency have sufficient staff and other resources to be able to conduct targeted surveillance of novel influenza strains, such as identifying H3N2v cases associated with agricultural fairs or school surveillance for ILI cases?

Which surveillance systems provide useful data for monitoring health impact during seasons with highly pathological influenza strains?

Which surveillance systems provide useful data for identifying the presence of novel influenza strains and conducting situational awareness?

Keywords

situational awareness; influenza surveillance; H3N2v; resource limitations

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