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ISDS INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY FOR DISEASE SURVEILLANCE

Redefining Syndromic Surveillance

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Objective

To provide a forum for stakeholders from various sectors of syndromic surveillance research and practice to discuss and establish a more accurate and comprehensive yet succinct definition of syndromic surveillance, based on lessons learned and innovations in public health surveillance practice.

Introduction

The field of syndromic surveillance has received increased attention over the past decade as an expansion of traditional disease detection methods. There is, however, little or no consensus, regarding a standard definition encompassing the full scope of the term "syndromic surveillance". Several researchers have proposed at least 36 alternative names to differentiate various forms of syndromic surveillance but none has taken hold (including early warning, health indicator surveillance, enhanced surveillance, among others). Katz et al presented a redefining of syndromic surveillance as two overarching categories of "syndrome based" versus "syndrome non-specific" surveillance[1]. In addition, the Meaningful Use Stage 2 standard for syndromic surveillance includes both pre-diagnostic and diagnostic data elements, further broadening the scope of this surveillance method.

Description

In this roundtable, we will solicit feedback and aim to achieve consensus on the scope and definition of syndromic surveillance. While this topic is discussed frequently in informal settings, our goal is to develop concrete recommendations in a structured, focused session.

Audience Engagement

The facilitators will provide a list of commonly used definitions for syndromic surveillance collated from the literature and websites and ask roundtable participants to categorize the strengths and weaknesses of these definitions. With three facilitators, we can break up into three small groups to further encourage discussion as needed. We will then identify key terms and concepts to include in a new definition. If there is time remaining in the roundtable we will also discuss alternatives to the name syndromic surveillance and debate whether we need to keep using the name "syndromic surveillance" because that is the term used in meaningful use regulations.

Keywords

syndromic surveillance; definitions; lessons learned; future directions

References

Katz R, May, L, Baker J, Test E. Redefining syndromic surveillance. Journal of Epidemiology and Global Health 2011; 1, 21-31.

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