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Influenza surveillance in Africa: What strategy for its sustainability, the Senegalese experience

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Increased surveillance in recent years has begun to fill in some of the huge information gaps regarding influenza in Africa. Now, the challenge is how to sustain influenza surveillance in African countries where many other diseases are priorities for health authorities. In Senegal, since 2013 an integrated approach for monitoring febrile diseases was established by Pasteur Institute of Dakar (IPD) and the Ministry of Health. We present the challenges and steps involved in improving the influenza sentinel surveillance network in Senegal. Surveillance was based on data collected by sentinel general practitioners (SGP). The SGPs report the number of cases and the total number of patient visits on a daily basis. They were expected to communicate encrypted data by cellular telephone. Regarding case definition criteria, fever was the first symptom targeted. Four diseases associated with fever were selected in the present surveillance: Confirmed malaria cases; influenza-like illness and arboviruses infections. Samples were collected from consenting ILI patients at each sentinel site and diagnostic is performed by multiplex PCR using CDC protocol for influenza virus detection. Weekly reports were prepared and transmitted by MoH to district public health staff. 33% of ILI has been confirmed as flu. The children were the most affected (43%). Having an integrated monitoring approach can be the best strategy to monetize the limited resources and then to perpetuate the surveillance in low resource countries. Syndromic surveillance can provides rapid benefits in terms of epidemic prevention and public health decision-making.

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Emerging influenza viruses at risk in global health

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Since the emergence of a novel aquatic bird flu agent in humans may be detected in near future, approaches to early diagnosis and prompt therapy are welcome. The swine origin influenza virus (S-OIV) detected in April 2009 in Mexico, Canada and USA exhibited a unique genome composition not shown before. The emerging new flu agent can cause outbreaks of febrile respiratory infection from mild to severe diseases throughout the world. This abstract has the purpose to emphasize the possibility of tracking the new influenza virus in the most affected regions of the world and to avoid a sad toll flu related death that might occur. The possible causes of high incidence and mortality rates are discussed as well as their implications on the public opinion and the prevention campaign.

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