

national authorities to co-ordinate action. The exchange of surveillance data between national centres should provide:

- early warning of threats to health;
- recognition of threats which might not be recognized at national level;
- recognition of threats which require international co-ordinated action;
- a wider base of knowledge which allows hypothesis generation;
- sharing knowledge and resources;
- opportunities for evaluation of national surveillance systems;
- raising standards of national centres.

1.3 International collaboration in surveillance: difficulties

International collaborations require clear and common operating procedures. It is essential to develop a common language to ensure the compatibility of surveillance data.

The establishment of common case definitions, common data collection and management need to be agreed within and between countries. Laboratory diagnostics and quality assurance methods need to be standardized. The different laws and ethical approaches to release patient identifier information need to be considered and differences in the development of public health policies and health systems linked to political and financial constraints must also be taken into account.

1.4 European collaboration in surveillance: activities

Considerable emphasis was given to the development of communicable disease surveillance in Europe by WHO programme "Health for all" in 1984. The programme includes various targets, such as the elimination of measles, polio, congenital rubella, diphtheria, congenital syphilis and malaria from member countries by the year 2000.

Recent developments in electronic communication have facilitate progress in establishing national and international public health surveillance systems.

The surveillance of communicable disease in Europe has been undertaken by the WHO, the European Community and national and international organizations:

Some of the activities in surveillance of communicable disease in Europe include:

- "Salm-Net" (1994) / "Salm/Enternet" (1997) - a laboratory based surveillance system of human Salmonellosis and EHEC infections (14 countries). Rapid exchange of information on detection of international foodborne outbreaks.
- "EWGLI" (1987) - a laboratory based surveillance scheme for travel associated legionnaires' disease (26 collaborators in 23 countries) - value in the detection of outbreak of travel associated legionnaires. The collaboration has allowed common case definition and methodologies.

- "The European centre for the epidemiological monitoring of AIDS" - quarterly updates on the HIV/AIDS epidemic; allows comparisons of trends between countries; common case definitions and common collaborative research projects were established.
- "Tuberculosis surveillance"- recommendations for uniform reporting on TB cases based on clinical and laboratory status were set up in 1994 by 37 countries of the WHO. TB surveillance in Europe, developed by the European centre for the epidemiological monitoring of AIDS, has started in 1996 based on these recommendations.
- "European concerted action on Lyme Borreliosis"(EUCALB)
- "HELICS"- "Hospital in Europe Link for Infection Control through Surveillance". A project to standardize the surveillance methods of hospital acquired infection (1994/1995). The protocols allowed a pilot European database to be created.
- "Bacterial Meningitis Surveillance"(35 European countries) - information about the epidemiology of meningococcal disease.
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- "The European Sero-Epidemiological Network"(ESEN) - established in 1996 to co-ordinate and harmonize the serological surveillance of immunity to vaccine preventable diseases (measles, mumps, rubella, pertussis, diphtheria) in 6 countries in Europe.
- "Antimicrobial resistance in humans and animals in Europe".
- "European electronic network on communicable diseases: The IDA_HSSCD programme"- established in 1996 it is a computer based community wide network which allows communications between member states for the collection and dissemination of data, collaborate in outbreak investigations and to share databases and other essential information for communicable diseases.
- "Hib vaccination and description of risk factors for Hib vaccine failure in Europe" - established in 1996.
- "EPIET - European Programme for Intervention Epidemiology Training"- started in 1995. Aims to create a network of professionals throughout Europe trained to use a standard approach in intervention epidemiology including field work, surveillance, applied research, communication and the use of epidemiological information as a basis for public health action.
- "European surveillance bulletin" (1996) - development of infrastructure allowing interchanges of common material and methods for communication of surveillance information across Europe.