

ESSTI Newsletter No.4

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Update on the ESSTI/ECDC survey “New variant of Chlamydia restricted to Sweden?”

There has been an enthusiastic response to the ESSTI/ECDC survey with 16 countries to date having returned the questionnaire. The variant has been reported so far in three countries, Sweden, Norway and Finland. The results of the survey are currently being collated and the initial results will be published on the members section of the ESSTI website shortly. A report will also be submitted to EuroSurveillance. ESSTI and ECDC plan to repeat the survey in six months time to determine if there have been any changes and to get feedback from the investigations that a number of countries are currently carrying out.

ESSTI has been in close contact with Roche throughout this period and Roche have issued the following statement to the ESSTI newsletter. “In response to the

new Chlamydia variant initially found in Sweden(1), Roche Diagnostics is recommending that laboratories monitor their Chlamydia incidence rate for possible significant declines in normal incidence rates that may be due to the emergence of mutated strains. However, please note, a drop in the Chlamydia-positive rate at a laboratory does not necessarily indicate the presence of this new Chlamydia strain. Roche Molecular Diagnostics is working very closely with global organizations and institutions around this topic. The company is working on a solution and is keeping laboratories informed about the availability of new Roche products that will detect this new strain.”

Footnote 1 <http://www.eurosurveillance.org/ew/2007/070208.asp#4>

Relaunch of ESSTI_ALERT

ESSTI_ALERT was restarted at the end of February with an email request sent to all collaborators asking for their January data. Monthly results will be emailed to all collaborators with quarterly reports posted on the ESSTI website. ESSTI_ALERT was an important component of the ESSTI project during 2003 and 2004 and was instrumental in increasing awareness of the LGV outbreaks across Europe. At the end of 2006 all collaborators were asked to complete a short evaluation questionnaire to help us determine whether any changes to the system needed to be made and to discover how ESSTI_ALERT was perceived. Fifteen countries returned the questionnaire; nine respondents had previously participated in the reporting scheme. All respondents considered ESSTI_ALERT either successful (n=6/13) or partially successful (n=7/13) in obtaining and disseminating information on unusual events related to STI transmission across Europe. Respondents had an overall positive opinion of the public health value of ESSTI_ALERT with only one respondent dissenting. As a result of the evaluation a number of small changes have been made to the reporting form including the addition of a new event classification, “unusual laboratory observation”, in response to the recent events in Sweden. A full breakdown of the results is available on the ESSTI DATA page of the ESSTI website.

Events and Activities

Surveillance Training Course

A one-week course on the surveillance of sexually transmitted infections will be held 3rd-7th September 2007 at HPA Centre for Infections, London. The course will be run in collaboration with the “Knowledge Hub on Capacity Building in HIV Surveillance”. Further information and an invitation for applications will be issued in the coming months.

ESSTI and the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC)

Emma Savage on behalf of the ESSTI network attended the first working group on The European Surveillance System (TESSy) on 14th-15th February held at the ECDC in Stockholm. At the end of March members of the ESSTI project team met

with colleagues at ECDC to discuss the development of the STI component of the European surveillance system and future data collection.

QA panel

The ESSTI quality assurance (QA) panel was distributed to 19 countries in February. The panel consists of 10 strains in triplicate of *N. gonorrhoeae* with differing antimicrobial susceptibilities. The panel will be tested by each laboratory, using their own methodology, and the results are returned centrally for analysis. This will allow us to identify reproducibility problems and offer a comparison between laboratories, as well as examine the effect of the different methods on concordance of results, with the aim of clarifying best practice. The results should be reported back to the hub by the end of April.

Contact details of the ESSTI Team at HPA

Edmund Donovan ESSTI Administrator

Health Protection Agency, Centre for Infections, 61 Colindale Avenue, London NW9 5EQ
Tel: + 44 (0) 20 8327 6582 Fax: + 44 (0) 20 8200 7868 Email: essti@hpa.org.uk

Emma Savage Scientific Coordinator

Address: As above Tel: +44 (0) 20 8327 7490 Email: essti@hpa.org.uk

www.essti.org

ESSTI Meeting Report

The full report of the ESSTI Collaborative and Steering Group 2006 meeting is now available on the ESSTI website <http://www.essti.org>. To request a hard copy please email essti@hpa.org.uk.

ESSTI Newsletter

If you have an article or a short news piece that you would like included in future editions of this newsletter please contact Edmund Donovan at essti@hpa.org.uk.