IN BELGIUM

Meningococcal disease update

In the month of June 2003, the IPH meningococcal reference laboratory has reported 18 cases of meningococcal disease, including 2 deaths (one from serogroup B and one from serogroup C). In this period, only 3 cases of serogroup C have been reported (17% of all typed cases) compared to 6 cases (46%) in June 2002 and 15 cases (58%) in June 2001.

The number of serogroup C cases reported in the first semester 2003 (N=34) indicates a decrease of nearly 50% compared to the average reported in the same period of the previous 4 years (N=66). The highest drop is reported in Vlaanderen (64% less cases) while the number of cases reported in Wallonie shows a 22% drop (figure). The number of cases in Brussels is too low to draw conclusions.

The most likely hypothesis to explain this decrease is the impact of the vaccination campaigns, especially in Vlaanderen where the campaign is still ongoing and has targeted wider age cohorts than Wallonie: the French speaking Community has targeted children aged 1-6 years while the Flemish speaking Community has also included adolescents around 10-14 years and plans to cover the entire 1-18 years cohort before the end of 2004. However, further analysis and additional data are required to study the impact of the campaigns on the disease incidence. No increase of other serogroups has been observed so far: in the first semester 2003, 93 cases of serogroup B have been reported compared to an average of 105 in 1999-2002 (same period).
Increase of imported cases of dengue fever

The European Network on Imported Infectious Disease Surveillance (TropNetEurop) has observed an increase of imported dengue fever cases in Europe since autumn 2002. For the whole year 2002, they have seen a clear increase of reports within their sentinel system from 140 to 218 cases. The majority of all patients with dengue fever have been reported from Germany (45%), followed by Sweden, Spain, and Austria. 80% are confirmed cases. Most patients with dengue fever were Europeans (94%), mainly tourists or business travellers. If compared to 2001, the rate of infections per geographical area has shifted towards South East Asia and Oceania. In particular, Thailand and Indonesia were contributing an increasing number of dengue patients. Reporting of dengue generally follows a clear seasonal pattern with peaks during the travel seasons in summer and winter. However, 2002 saw larger-than-usual numbers during and after the Easter holiday and well into the summer season. Complications warranting a diagnosis of "dengue hemorrhagic fever" occurred in 8% of all patients. This is a clear increase in comparison to 2001, when complicated dengue occurred in only 1.6% of patients. Most of the patients with complications had been to Thailand. Details of the dengue report 2002 can be viewed and downloaded at http://www.tropnet.net/reports_friends/reports_friends_index.html. Source: Promed (http://www.promedmail.org)

In Belgium, the Reference laboratory based at the Tropical Institute of Antwerp has reported 50 new cases of imported dengue in 2002. 58% of cases had travelled to South East Asia and 26% to South America. Source: IPH, Sentinel Laboratories Annual Report 2002 on http://www.iph.fgov.be/epidemio/epifr/plabfr/plabanfr/gdenfrlr.pdf (French) or http://www.iph.fgov.be/epidemio/epinl/plabnl/plabannl/gdennlr.pdf (Dutch).