

Disease Surveillance Skill Development Guide

Practice Scenario Instructions and Worksheets

Instructions: Read each scenario and write your answers to the questions in the space provided. You may want to form small groups to discuss your answers to the questions. Refer to the sample responses in the Appendix to help focus and guide your discussion.

Note: The scenarios in this activity use a hospital as a primary example of an infectious disease reporting entity. Feel free to change this example to another reporting entity (such as a medical clinic or laboratory) to reflect your local situation.

Disease Surveillance & Reporting: Practice

Scenario A: Communicating Importance

You are working at a public health department and want the local hospital to provide more timely and in depth infectious disease reports. The hospital usually reports only a portion of their infectious diseases to the health department, and those that are reported are often late. You meet with the hospital's medicine and infection control staff to help them understand the importance of timely and thorough infectious disease reporting.

How will you explain the importance of infectious disease reporting by health care providers?

What objections might you anticipate during this discussion (such as not having the staff or resources to allow for reporting)?

How will you address these objections?

Scenario B: Explaining Passive & Active Methods

After speaking with the hospital staff, it becomes clear to you that they are understaffed. Consider their staffing issues as you answer the following questions.

What are the advantages and disadvantages of both passive and active surveillance methods that could be used to enhance infectious disease surveillance for your public health department and the hospital?

Passive Surveillance:

- Advantages:

- Disadvantages:

Active Surveillance:

- Advantages:

- Disadvantages:

What do you see as your biggest strengths in using both active and passive surveillance methods?

What opportunities for improvement do you see to enhance your ability to use these methods?

Scenario C: Implementing Syndromic Surveillance

The hospital contacts you a week later to discuss implementing a syndromic surveillance system.

Will this system be sufficient to address their disease reporting responsibilities?

What are the pros and cons of using such a system?

Your agency may be asked to implement a syndromic surveillance system. What information would you need to evaluate whether your agency should implement the system?

Outbreak Investigation: Practice

Scenario A: Identifying an Outbreak

It is Tuesday morning and you have received three calls today from people who say they got sick the day after they ate at Restaurant X on Sunday. Two had a fever and diarrhea; one vomited for several hours.

Is this an outbreak?

What steps do you take to determine if it's a suspected outbreak?

Do you look for more cases?

Do you look for controls (persons who also ate at Restaurant X but didn't get sick)?

If yes to either or both questions, how do you look for more cases/controls? Or do you wait to see if you hear about more sick people before you do anything?

Scenario B: Continuing the Investigation

It's Tuesday afternoon and you've heard from a family of four who all got sick after eating at Restaurant X yesterday.

Do you do anything differently than in the previous scenario?

Do you contact the restaurant?

Do you contact the local health department's sanitarian?

How do you know if the illness cases are related?

Do you contact any laboratories?

Scenario C: Taking Action

After thoroughly interviewing sick and non-sick patrons of Restaurant X, it seems as though the likely source of the illness is lettuce or green onions.

What actions can be taken to prevent others from becoming ill as a result of dining at Restaurant X?