

## ***Work sheet on the International Health Regulations revision proposals.***

### **I Notification of Public Health Emergencies of International Concern under the revised IHR**

#### Background

After a good deal of time and careful consideration of the alternatives, WHO is proposing to move from the IHR obligation of notifying cases of specified diseases (currently cholera, plague and yellow fever) to the obligatory notification of *public health emergencies of international concern*. Such a concept represents a major change in approach for most national and international disease surveillance systems which rely largely on clinical or laboratory diagnosis for the reporting of disease. The rationale for the change has been explained in the document "Global Crises - Global Solutions"

#### Objectives

In order to assist Member States and WHO in the identification of *public health emergencies of international concern* the Swedish Institute for Infectious Diseases carried out a project to identify the proposed criteria that define such emergencies and incorporated these into a simple decision instrument to assist decision making. In this session you will have the opportunity to use the prototype decision instrument in a number of disease outbreak scenarios. The objectives are:

1. to understand the concept of *public health emergencies of international concern*
2. to evaluate how easy it is to use the instrument
3. to evaluate how useful the instrument is in your decision making regarding notification to WHO and to see how consistently it can be applied
4. to compare the answers given by applying the instrument with your individual and group opinion

#### Process

There will be resource persons to assist you with any questions around the process or particulars of the exercise. Begin by appointing a chairman and rapporteur. Work through the exercise sequentially and record answers individually for each question before discussing them in the group. In all cases, you are advising the national IHR focal point to report or not to report the outbreak or event to WHO.

## Scenario

Cholera is endemic to your country and on average there are 120 cases and around 5 deaths per year with a seasonal distribution. The few commodities your country exports are generally sent to other countries within a cholera endemic region. In the first 3 months of this year there have been 75 cases with 3 deaths. The cases have occurred in a remote rural area and health authorities are undertaking measures to protect water supplies.

- a) Is the event serious? – Use the information from the support questions to the decision instrument to assist you with this decision.
  
- b) Is the event unusual or unexpected? – Use the information from the support questions to the decision instrument to assist you with this decision.
  
- c) Is there a significant risk of international spread? – Use the information from the support questions to the decision instrument to assist you with this decision.
  
- d) Is there any potential risk for international trade or travel restrictions? – Use the information from the support questions to the decision instrument to assist you with this decision.
  
- e) Using the decision instrument, and your answers to the above questions, would you report this to WHO as a *public health emergency of international concern*?
  
- f) Use the information you have to apply the decision making instrument – Does the instrument help you to make a decision?
  
- g) If you are unsure whether this event is a *public health emergency of international concern* - what are the key pieces of information you need to decide if it is or not?

## Scenario

Leptospirosis is endemic to your country. You receive a report of leptospirosis in the animal population in a park close to the capital city. The park is one of the tourist attractions in your country for both local and international travellers. In the area around the park, there have been reports in the previous month of two suspected cases in human, and one confirmed case who died.

- a) Is the event serious? – Use the information from the support questions to the decision instrument to assist you with this decision.
  
- b) Is the event unusual or unexpected? – Use the information from the support questions to the decision instrument to assist you with this decision.
  
- c) Is there a significant risk of international spread? – Use the information from the support questions to the decision instrument to assist you with this decision.
  
- d) Is there any potential risk for international trade or travel restrictions? – Use the information from the support questions to the decision instrument to assist you with this decision.
  
- e) Using the decision instrument, and your answers to the above questions, would you report this to WHO as a *public health emergency of international concern*?
  
- g) If you are unsure of whether this event is a *public health emergency of international concern* - what are the key pieces of information you need to decide if it is or not?

## Scenario

An outbreak of food borne disease has been traced to the kebab stand along side one of the major hotels in the capital city. The vendor has been notorious for poor hygiene practices and has regularly been closed down by the Health department. There have

been 7 cases of food poisoning so far detected, with no fatalities to date, however there is some concern about a group of visiting business men, who called at the stand late on the evening before they caught their plane back home.

- a) Is the event serious? – Use the information from the support questions to the decision instrument to assist you with this decision.
  
- b) Is the event unusual or unexpected? – Use the information from the support questions to the decision instrument to assist you with this decision.
  
- c) Is there a significant risk of international spread? – Use the information from the support questions to the decision instrument to assist you with this decision.
  
- d) Is there any potential risk for international trade or travel restrictions? – Use the information from the support questions to the decision instrument to assist you with this decision.
  
- e) Using the decision instrument, and your answers to the above questions, would you report this to WHO as a *public health emergency of international concern*?
  
- g) If you are unsure of whether this event is a *public health emergency of international concern* - what are the key pieces of information you need to decide if it is or not?

## Scenario

A national of your country arrives home after travelling overseas and is diagnosed with a mosquito-borne viral illness. The lag time between arriving home and the diagnosis is 2 weeks. The viral illness is not endemic to your country, but the mosquito vector is. A second case of the disease is diagnosed in a non-travelling national 2 weeks after the first case, and there is a suspected third case awaiting serology results. Experience with the disease elsewhere has indicated a case fatality rate of 30%. The cases have occurred in a large city and the media has been carrying reports and interviews with the cases and detailing the worst possible scenario of a national epidemic.

- a) Is the event serious? – Use the information from the support questions to the decision instrument to assist you with this decision.
  
- b) Is the event unusual or unexpected? – Use the information from the support questions to the decision instrument to assist you with this decision.
  
- c) Is there a significant risk of international spread? – Use the information from the support questions to the decision instrument to assist you with this decision.
  
- d) Is there any potential risk for international trade or travel restrictions? – Use the information from the support questions to the decision instrument to assist you with this decision.
  
- e) Using the decision instrument, and your answers to the above questions, would you report this to WHO as a *public health emergency of international concern*?
  
- f) If you are unsure about whether this event could be a *public health emergency of international concern* - what are the key pieces of information you feel you need to decide if it is or not?
  
- g) Is there any support needed from WHO to respond to this event at the moment?

Questions to be answered by the end of the exercise

1. Is the concept and value of notifying *public health emergencies of international concern* understood by your entire group?
2. Is the prototype instrument simple to apply in the scenarios provided?
3. Does using the instrument help the group to reach agreement about what and when to notify to WHO?
4. Does the decision indicated through the application of the instrument agree with subjective assessment of need to notify?
5. Are there important information elements that are not addressed by the current instrument?
6. Does the group have any recommendations or advice regarding the future content, format or evaluation of the instrument