

This article is an early release of information from Inform'ACTION No. 32, which will be published very soon.

16th Meeting of the PPHSN Coordinating Body



The 16th meeting of the Pacific Public Health Surveillance Network (PPHSN) Coordinating Body (CB) was held in Auckland, New Zealand on 22 March, one day before the International Health Regulations (IHR)/PPHSN meeting on syndromic surveillance (see article in this issue). The meeting brought together nine country representatives and core members of PPHSN, and eight representatives from the five allied members (see list below).

PPHSN Coordinating Body current membership

Core members

American Samoa (2010–2012)

Representative: Mrs Sharmain Mageo

Federated States of Micronesia (2010-2012)

Representative: Mr Marcus Samo

Fiji Islands (2008–2010)

Representative: Dr Eric Rafai

Guam (2009–2011)

Representative: Ms Lourdes Duguies

Niue (2009–2011)

Representative: Mr Manila Nosa

Tuvalu (2010–2012)

Representative: Dr Nese Ituaso-Conway or Dr Stephen Homasi

Wallis and Futuna (2009–2011)

Representative: Dr Vel Velmourougane

Allied members

Fiji College of Medicine, Nursing and Health Sciences* (FSMed) (permanent member)

Representative: Pr Ian Rouse

Institute of Environmental Science and Research (ESR), NZ

Representative: Dr Virginia Hope

Pasteur Institute of New Caledonia (IPNC)**

Representative: Dr Suzanne Chanteau or Dr Ann-Claire Gourinat

Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC) (permanent member)

Representative: Dr Tom Kiedrzyński or Dr Justus Benzler

World Health Organization (WHO) (permanent member)

Representative: Dr Jacob Kool

* New name of the Fiji School of Medicine

**Renewal of this seat will be organised this year.

The meeting was originally planned for August 2009, but was postponed until 2010 because all PPHSN members were preparing for the influenza A(H1N1) pandemic. Due to this delay, representatives of the three out-going core members of 2009 (Marshall Islands, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands and Tokelau) were invited to this meeting together with the three incoming core members of 2010 (American Samoa, Federated States of Micronesia and Tuvalu). This helped to maintain continuity in CB deliberations and facilitated smooth membership transition.

The one-day meeting was fruitful, with CB members reviewing progress on commitments made in response to the recommendations and minutes from the last two PPHSN-CB meetings held in 2008.

The list of recommendations made at this year's meeting includes:

- more communication among PPHSN members prior to CB meetings,
- sharing information on the trial of PacSurv (an adaptation of the New Zealand EpiSurv7 system) in Cook Islands,
- supporting standardisation of surveillance in the region,
- more flexibility from donors regarding funding mechanisms for specimen shipping,
- strategic laboratory development, and
- strengthening of in-country training programmes.

PPHSN-CB membership and communication

While going through the current renewal document for PPHSN-CB membership, CB members agreed that a process should be initiated to encourage CB core member (country) representatives to communicate with other members of their renewal triad groups (see PPHSN-CB Terms of Reference, accessible on PPHSN website). The communication process should allow countries not represented in the CB to bring issues to the attention of CB members for discussion during meetings.

Recommendation: CB members requested that SPC, as the PPHSN-CB focal point, facilitate communication among members of the triad groups before future CB meetings.

PacSurv system

PacSurv (an adaptation of the New Zealand EpiSurv7 system) was trialled in Cook Islands in May 2009. The system had been adapted for the Cook Islands and used there for several months to enter data during the H1N1 pandemic, as well as retrospective data of a dengue outbreak earlier in the year. An evaluation of this trial has been carried out by SPC and ESR, and a report of the evaluation has been compiled and submitted for endorsement.

Recommendation: CB members requested that the report regarding the Cook Islands trial be shared with PPHSN members as soon as it is endorsed.

Standardisation of surveillance

Recommendation: CB members expressed their support for standardisation of surveillance and regional information sharing.

Resources for response

CB members talked about current funding mechanisms for specimen shipping, which are often limited to specific pathogen(s).



Recommendation: PPHSN members should approach donors and ask them to facilitate integrated and flexible specimen shipping mechanisms that are not pathogen-specific.

LabNet

Many laboratory activities and improvements have occurred since the last regional LabNet meeting in 2006. A number of subregional training workshops were conducted to address immediate influenza laboratory issues under the project on strengthening lab-based influenza surveillance in the Pacific (see article in this issue).

A regional lab strategy paper has been developed by a group that includes Salanieta Elbourne, Laboratory Specialist from SPC in support of the WHO Asia-Pacific laboratory strengthening strategy that has been confirmed by Asian-Pacific Laboratories, and will be presented during a regional meeting that will take place in September 2010 (probably in Nadi, Fiji). This regional lab strategy paper will then be shared with PPHSN members at the upcoming regional LabNet meeting.

SPC, in collaboration with the Pacific Paramedical Training Centre, FSMed and Pacific Island Health Officers Association are currently discussing lab training improvements for the Pacific, and will include WHO in these discussions.

Recommendations: CB members believe that a regional LabNet meeting should be organised soon to address strategic laboratory development. They also agreed that a LabNet Technical Working Body should be re-established (and include WHO, SPC, ESR, IPNC, and other reference labs) to examine laboratory issues for the region.

Training (surveillance and response)

Recommendations: CB members proposed that a technical working group (including FSMed, WHO and SPC) be re-established to look at training programmes for the Pacific. They also agreed that in-country training should be strengthened in the following fields:

- Field epidemiology (data for decision making (DDM) training for instance)
- Entomology
- Infection control for nurses.

Finally, they recommended that long-term funding should be committed (for at least three years) for accredited modular training programmes (e.g. field epidemiology training programme, DDM).

Other issues

A number of other issues were also discussed: harmonisation of agencies' requests for information, PPHSN services (i.e. PacNet, Inform'ACTION, EpiNet and PICNet) and risk communication.

Representatives of PPHSN-CB allied members also made presentations on the support and services that their organisation or institution can offer to PPHSN members.

Next meeting

Recommendation: CB members agreed that the next CB meeting shall be held in Fiji in November 2010, in conjunction with a LabNet meeting (funds permitting). FSMed offered to host these meetings.

Minutes and presentations from this meeting are available on the PPHSN's website:

<http://www.spc.int/phs/PPHSN/>

