

DECEMBER 2003

## LabNet origins in PPHSN background

- **March 1996:** PPHSN creation is recommended by the SPC 15th Regional Conference of Heads of Health Services
- **December 1996:** PPHSN is established at the SPC/WHO Pacific Islands Meeting on Public Health Surveillance
- **April 1997:** PacNet is created
- **January 1999:** PacNet-Lab is created, following the Pacific Telehealth conference
- **June–October 1999:** Regional laboratory assessment (questionnaires – visits)
- **April 2000:** inaugural meeting of the PPHSN Public Health Laboratory Network
- **December 2001–March/April 2002:** EpiNet I, II and III subregional workshops, focusing on the six PPHSN target diseases, advocate a practical and realistic approach for the role of laboratories
- **July 2002:** LabNet Technical Working Body meets and reports to the 8th PPHSN Coordinating Body (CB) meeting

### The LabNet concept

The idea of LabNet came from the recognition that many Pacific Islands have little or no ready access to public health laboratory services. Existing laboratory services are usually hospital-based.

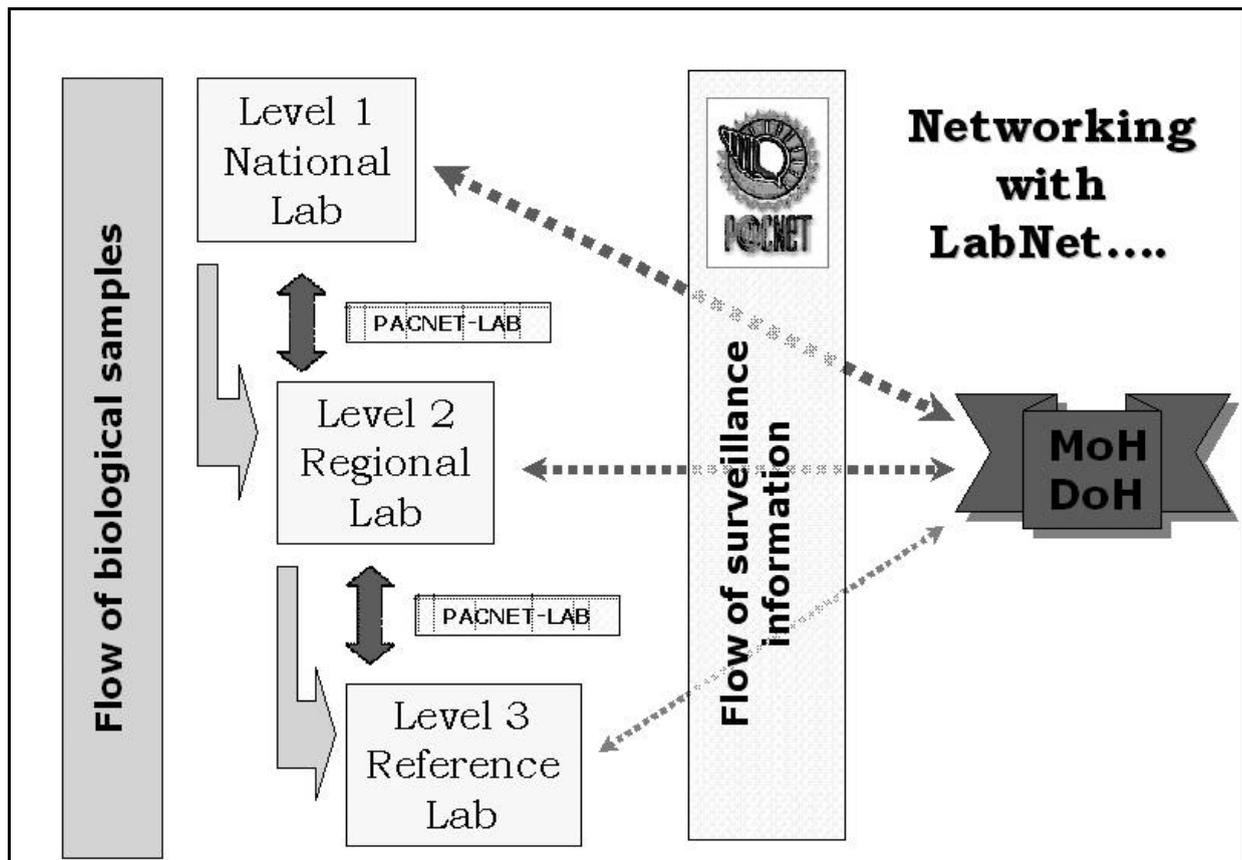
LabNet is a three-level network of laboratories: L1, L2 and L3, where “level” doesn’t refer to the capacity of the lab, but to its role in the network.

- L1 labs are the labs of the PPHSN member countries and territories. This level is the closest to patients and clinicians facing an outbreak alert. L1 labs collect samples from suspect patients and when possible use screening tests. They should have ready access to L2 or L3 lab confirmation services for selected diseases.
- L2 regional labs perform the first level of confirmation tests for L1 labs. The techniques they run require more training and equipment than those used at L1 labs. They are further supported by L3 labs. L2 regional labs are also L1 labs in their country or territory.
- L3 labs are reference laboratories. They are usually internationally recognised labs (e.g. WHO-associated centres), located in the Pacific Rim countries (mainly Australia, New Zealand and USA). In addition to the L2 disease-specific role, they perform more sophisticated, less urgently needed tests, giving important epidemiological information for the region or in the context of the worldwide surveillance of major diseases (such as dengue virus genotyping, influenza subtyping or *Leptospira* serogrouping).

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**LabNet** gives recommendations and support for shipping and testing of specimens and has a dedicated email mailing list (PacNet-Lab).

Diagrammatic representation of LabNet



MoH = Ministries of Health  
DoH = Departments of Health