

Regional Workshop LabNet 2010 promoting the 'One Health' approach



The 4th LabNet regional workshop, which was held from 1 to 4 November 2010 in Suva, Fiji Islands, promoted the 'One Health' approach, an approach that brings together human and animal health.

Human and animal health laboratory technicians from most Pacific Island countries and territories (PICTs) participated in the workshop and forged stronger links between animal and human health in terms of disease diagnostics capability in the region.

One participant wrote in the evaluation form: 'There is now a forum for pursuing further collaboration between these two sectors (laboratory human and animal health).'

The meeting was particularly useful for small PICTs, as they are looking to maximise their limited animal health resources by sharing, where possible, with human health laboratory resources.

Panel discussions included assessment of the current status of laboratory training, laboratory testing, specimen shipment, links and support available through reference laboratories, guidelines to manage PPHSN target diseases¹ and animal diseases of public health importance.

Actions proposed at the meeting include the completion of human and animal health laboratory policies, improving laboratory procurements and the establishment of systems for referring samples between human health and animal health laboratories.

Proper selection of participants from the countries was once again highlighted to ensure the region truly benefits by acquiring skills developed at regional capacity-building training.

The LabNet technical working body, formed at the first LabNet meeting in 2000, is to be revived, with revised terms of references that take into account animal health issues and interests.

A similar laboratory network platform, the Pacific Animal Health Laboratory Network (PAHLNet) was established in 2009 through the Pacific Regional Influenza Pandemic Preparedness Project (PRIPPP) and is taking on board similar activities that made PPHSN LabNet a success.

¹ Dengue fever, measles, rubella, influenza, leptospirosis, typhoid fever, cholera, SARS and HIV/STIs.

Draft meeting resolutions were put together at the conclusion of the meeting by participants, and they are currently under circulation for final comments. They will then be put together in a plan of action by the LabNet Technical Working Body to address the issues highlighted as part of the laboratory strengthening strategy in our islands.

Training opportunity

A one-day training session on the dangerous goods regulation (DGR) relating to packaging and shipment of human and animal health specimens was delivered by Ms Vasiti Uluiviti of the Pacific Islands Health Officers Association at the beginning of the workshop. The International Air Transport Association (IATA) DGR emphasises the importance of the initial and recurrent training programmes on dangerous goods to develop an appreciation of the risks involved.



A total of forty-five participants attended the DGR training, with forty-one sitting the certification exam. Twenty-four participants from public health and fourteen from animal health passed as certified shippers for Category A/B human and animal diagnostic specimens. Non-certified participants are still eligible to package Category B specimens.

The participants really appreciated the IATA training. One participant said: 'I feel confident in packaging samples and collecting samples for reference laboratories.'

Partnership

The workshop was organised by the Secretariat of the Pacific Community in collaboration with the Fiji School of Medicine, the World Health Organization (WHO) and other partners under the framework of LabNet.

It was funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), FSMed, AusAID and NZAID through the PRIPP project coordinated by SPC.

Other PPHSN/LabNet partners that were represented included the CDC, the Institute of Environmental Science and Research in New Zealand and WHO offices and collaborating centres in Fiji, Manila and Melbourne. international and regional animal health institutions and reference libraries were also represented and they added diversity to the forum.

More information on LabNet and the 2010 workshop can be found on PPHSN website:

<http://www.spc.int/phs/PPHSN/Services/LabNet/intro.htm>

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