

Typhoid fever outbreak in Fiji – situation as at 31 August 2005

From January 2005 to the end of August, the total number of laboratory-confirmed *Salmonella typhi* cases seen in Fiji Islands was 186.

Table 1: Number of laboratory-confirmed *S. typhi* cases as at 31 August 2005

Area	Number of cases as at 31/08/05	Case fatality
CentEast Division	38	1
Western Division	1	0
Northern Division	147	0
TOTAL	186	1

One death was recorded in Suva in March, but this case involved other complications besides typhoid. All the other cases have been closely monitored and followed up. In addition, other clinically suspected and chronic typhoid carriers have been appropriately managed and followed up.

Note: It's important to note that laboratories are not under any obligation to notify the Ministry of Health (MoH) of laboratory-confirmed cases of typhoid fever or suspected cases of typhoid fever. In addition, the MoH does not have good baseline data for typhoid fever and other communicable diseases and neither, therefore, for endemicity status, transmission hot spots, at risk groups, etc.

The response

Since the beginning of the outbreak, extensive community awareness and health promotion efforts have been implemented in affected areas such as Koro Island, selected residential areas around the Suva area, and Batiri village and the Savusavu area in the north. For every case picked up at the hospital, a team that includes the medical, infection control and environmental health officers for the area is mobilised to conduct field investigations with the family and contacts of the case. Household members and contacts are tested (stool examination) and treated accordingly.

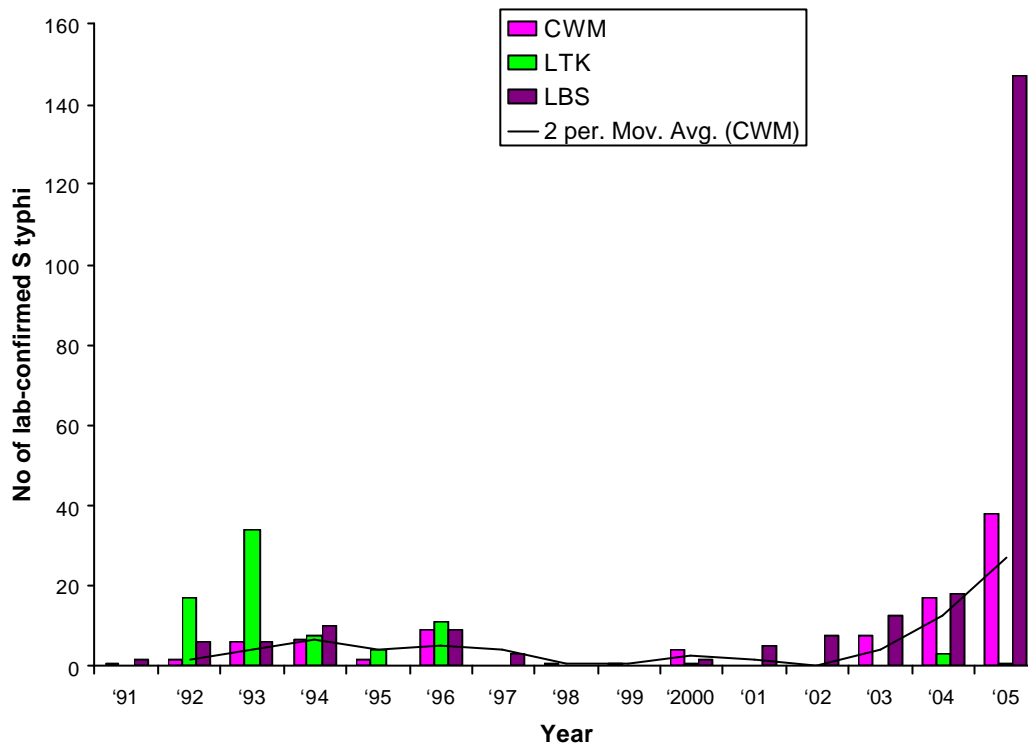
At the end of August, interventions such as community and communication mobilisation with health promotion strategies and activities were being undertaken throughout Fiji, among both the public and health professionals.

History of typhoid activity in Fiji: 1 January 1991 – 31 August 2005

From 1 January 1991 to 31 August 2005, a total of 404 laboratory-confirmed cases were seen in Fiji.

As Figure 1 shows, high levels of typhoid activity were seen in the early 1990s. From 2000 onwards, there has been a gradual increase in the number of laboratory-confirmed cases, exceeding numbers in the 1990s. The question currently been asked is: Is this happening because of increased awareness amongst practitioners, is it due to an increase in testing capacity, or is it due to an actual increase in disease activity in the country?

Figure 1: Laboratory-confirmed cases of *S. typhi* in Fiji from 1 January 1991 to 31 August 2005



Limitations with laboratory data analysis

Information provided by the laboratories for analysis was limited. For example, it did not include:

- demographics: age, gender, address,
- clinical information: date of onset,
- total number of requests received at the microbiology laboratory over time.

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