
Chapter 3

Setting up Surveillance Systems

Disease surveillance essentially concerns gathering information that is critical for rationally planning, operating and evaluating public health activities. Participants of disease surveillance programs receive reports from sources which are both official and unofficial. Information from official sources originates from the local health care providers who see patients, passes from the local public health officer to one or more intermediate levels (such as city, state and province) and from there, goes to the national epidemiology group. Member Governments of the World Health Organization have agreed about procedures for international notification of selected diseases, and the method of reporting and emergency measures to be taken (29). In the handbook *Control of Communicable Diseases in Man*, the procedures are discussed in detail and the category of each contagious disease is indicated (27). Only cholera, plague, smallpox and yellow fever are currently subject to the International Health Regulations. Four other diseases, influenza, louse-borne epidemic typhus, louse-borne relapsing fever, and malaria, are under international surveillance.

Surveillance of Diseases between Disasters under Normal Conditions

Figure 1 is a reproduction of the Pan American Health Organization weekly report form for communicable diseases. It contains a list of the diseases that countries are asked to investigate through their national system of surveillance. The diseases included in the national surveillance program of each country vary considerably. Diseases given the highest priority for international reporting are invariably investigated, but in some countries certain diseases are not unless they are endemic

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Figure 1: Form for Weekly Report of Communicable Diseases Used at the Pan American Health Organization

Country _____ Week ended _____ 19____ Number _____

Disease and Category International Classification of Diseases (1975 Revision)	Total for Week	Cumulative Total for Year
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Diseases Subject to the International Health Regulations +

Cholera (001)

Plague (020)

Smallpox (050)

Sylvatic yellow fever (060.0)

Urban yellow fever (060.1)

Unspecified yellow fever (060.9)

Diseases under International Surveillance

Influenza (487)

Louse-borne (epidemic) typhus (080)

Louse-borne relapsing fever (087.0)

Malaria (084)

Diseases of the Expanded Program on Immunization

Poliomyelitis, acute (045)

Measles (055)

Diphtheria (032)

Tetanus (excludes neonatorum) (037)

Tetanus neonatorum (771.3)

Whooping cough (033)

Other Diseases of Regional Interest

Typhoid fever (002.0)

Dengue (061)

Meningococcal infection (036)

Arenaviral hemorrhagic fever (Argentinian or
Bolivian hemorrhagic fever) (078.7)

Mosquito-borne viral encephalitis (062)
