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Research Summary

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Title COVID-19 Vaccine Safety Surveillance in Vanuatu in the first three months of implementation, 2021

Abstract

COVID-19 Vaccine Safety Surveillance in Vanuatu in the first three months of implementation, 2021

Background
Vanuatu launched its national COVID-19 vaccination campaign in SHEFA province on 2/6/2021. Prior to this, there were no Adverse Events Following Immunisation (AEFI) surveillance in place. Here we describe the AEFI surveillance system established, and assess the safety of this vaccination campaign in its first three months of implementation.

Methods
A passive surveillance system was established based on WHO guidance for AEFI surveillance. Clinicians completed an AEFI report for all individuals that presented with a potential AEFI and assessed the need for AEFI investigation. Two COVID-19 vaccines are used in Vanuatu (AstraZeneca & Sinopharm). We calculated the reporting rate by vaccine product (AstraZeneca and Sinopharm) and by epidemiological week (EpiWeek, a standard reporting period of Monday to Sunday).

Results
A total of 38,236 doses of COVID-19 Vaccines were administered in SHEFA between 2/6/2021 and 29/8/2021, including 32,650 doses of AstraZeneca and 5,586 of Sinopharm. A total of 179 AstraZeneca recipients reported an AEFI, a rate of 5 per 1000 doses. Among these, nine were classified as serious and investigations and causality assessments were initiated. A total of 12 Sinopharm recipients reported an AEFI, a rate of 2 per 1000 doses. Among these, two cases were investigated. The reporting rate dropped from 8 per 1000 doses in EpiWeek 23 to 2 per 1000 doses in EpiWeek 34. The overall AEFI reporting rate in Vanuatu is 4.9 per 1000 doses for both vaccines.

Conclusion
The reporting rate of AEFI in Vanuatu is in line with Australia (3.3 per 1000) and New Zealand (4.1 per 1000). The rate is expected to continue to decline as awareness about common side effects increases and vaccine hesitancy decreases.