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Low investigation rate of Leptospirosis cases reported in Vanuatu from 2020-2022

Joanne Mariasua

Ministry of Health, Port Vila, Vanuatu

Abstract

Background: Leptospirosis is a bacterial infection transmitted from animals to humans which can cause symptoms such as fever, chills, headache, muscle aches, vomiting and diarrhoea. Since 2020, an increase in leptospirosis cases have been reported from all provinces among adults and children. The notification process in Vanuatu is for a medical officer to submit a notification to the provincial surveillance officer, and for the provincial surveillance officer to complete the case investigation. The number of notification forms received should equal the number of investigation forms. We sought to assess if all leptospirosis cases notified were investigated as they should be. All sentinel sites are required to report on notifiable diseases thus Leptospirosis included.

Methods: Notifications during the time period of interest were extracted from the Leptospirosis line list; the line list comprises of all notifications that were notified to provincial surveillance officers collated nationally. Investigation forms were collected via email. Investigation rates were calculated by dividing the number of investigations by the number of notifications, stratified by province and year.

Results: A total of 170 cases of leptospirosis were notified between May 2020 and July 2022, among which 9 (5%) were investigated. Investigation rates were lowest in Sanma province (3.5%) and highest in Shefa Province (28%). The year that had the lowest investigation rate was in 2021 and the highest investigation rate is in year 2022.

Conclusion: The impact of low investigation results in control and prevention measures not being implemented thus outbreak is ongoing. Further investigation is warranted to determine the reasons for the low investigation rate to ensure that leptospirosis outbreaks are effectively managed.