



The Department of Public Health Mid-West Newsletter

EDITION TWO, FEBRUARY 2019

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the second edition of our departmental newsletter. This newsletter focuses on measles and the recent measles outbreak in the Mid-West. We highlight the importance of primary prevention and share some lessons learnt from the outbreak. This newsletter also includes some updates on recent departmental news.

WHAT IS PRIMARY PREVENTION?

Primary prevention means preventing a disease from occurring in the first place. Vaccination is an example of a primary preventative measure.

WHAT IS AN OUTBREAK?

“An outbreak of infection or foodborne illness may be defined as two or more linked cases of the same illness or the situation where the observed number of cases exceeds the expected number, or a single case of disease caused by a significant pathogen (e.g. diphtheria or viral haemorrhagic fever).” See: <http://www.hpsc.ie/notifiablediseases/casedefinitions/outbreak/>

OUR 2018 ANNUAL REPORT

We recently published our Director of Public Health 2018 Annual Report for the Mid-West. The theme of the report is working together for better public health outcomes. The report presents a demographic overview of the local population. It also summarises recent work undertaken by our department with a focus on our health protection function. Finally, it highlights the value of working in partnership for better public health outcomes in the Mid-West. The report is available at <https://www.lenus.ie/handle/10147/624042>

NEW STAFF MEMBER

Ms Roseanne Boohan joined Public Health as a senior executive officer in November 2018 and has over 14 years of experience working in the health service. Roseanne provides senior administrative support to the Assistant National Director for Public Health and Child Health and to the Department of Public Health Mid-West.

national guidance (www.hpsc.ie/a-z/vaccinepreventable/measles/guidance/). Close contacts of cases with measles and the wider community were offered the MMR vaccine free-of-charge. GPs, the Occupational Health Service and HSE vaccination clinics administered these vaccines. Information on measles was provided to the health, education and public sectors. Local and national media further raised public awareness of the outbreak.

LESSONS LEARNT FROM THE MEASLES OUTBREAK

1. Healthcare associated transmission was an important factor in this outbreak which emphasises the importance of effective isolation measures in healthcare settings. It is also important that healthcare staff ensure that they are vaccinated against measles. The MMR vaccine is available to healthcare staff from the Occupational Health Service.
2. There were delays in diagnosis of measles as many clinicians are no longer familiar with the disease. Delays in the notification of measles to the Department of Public Health meant that some opportunities to implement outbreak control measures were delayed or missed.
3. Patients who had at least one dose of the MMR vaccine tended to have a milder illness. They had atypical presentations with no further onward transmission of measles detected.
4. Most of the cases occurred in adults. Measles vaccine was introduced in Ireland in 1985. There is a cohort of adults between 30-40 years of age who were never vaccinated and who never had measles (and therefore do not have natural immunity). However, there were also a number of cases of measles in adults aged over 40 years who would have been assumed to have natural immunity to measles.
5. There is an on-going risk of importation of measles due to a rise in the number of outbreaks across Europe over the past year. The measles outbreak in the Mid-West has been linked with a larger outbreak in France. Those who are travelling abroad should check that they and their family are up to date with the MMR vaccine prior to travel.

For information on notifiable infectious diseases, see: <http://www.hpsc.ie/notifiablediseases/>
For information on measles, see: www.hpsc.ie/a-z/vaccinepreventable/measles/

DEPARTMENTAL NEWS

RECENT CONFERENCES

- In August 2018, Ms Katie Evans and Dr Eimear Keane exhibited the work of our department at an international conference called The Network: Towards Unity for Health that was held in the University of Limerick.
- Dr Rose Fitzgerald attended the European Scientific Conference on Applied Infectious Disease Epidemiology (ESCAIDE) in Malta in November 2018.
- Dr Mai Mannix attended the 11th European Public Health Conference in Slovenia in November 2018.

GOOD NEWS

Dr Anne Dee and Dr Eimear Keane are partners on a successful HRB Knowledge Exchange and Dissemination Scheme (KEDS) grant. Professor Cathal Walsh, UL is the lead investigator on the grant. The aim of the grant is to host a local health and social inequalities conference in the Mid-West in late 2019.

OUR INTERNATIONAL PARTNERSHIP

We have an international partnership with Lalgadh Leprosy Hospital and Services Centre in Nepal. This is an ESTHER partnership funded by Irish Aid. Dr Breda Cosgrove and Ms Teresa Mulryne from our department travelled to Nepal in March 2018. Mr Ramesh Kumar Choudhary and Dr Sofiya Lama from Lalgadh Leprosy Hospital and Services Centre then travelled to the Department of Public Health Mid-West in December 2018. The aims of the exchange visits were to strengthen the focus on (1) research and (2) infection prevention and control. Opportunities for future collaboration were also identified during the exchange visits.



Protect. Prevent. Improve.

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