



Luxembourg 31 May 2011
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Flash Report

AUDIO CONFERENCE ON THE SHIGA TOXIN-PRODUCING *E. COLI* (STEC) OUTBREAK IN GERMANY AND NECESSARY FOLLOW-UP

31 MAY 2011, 16:00 – 17:30

Audio Conference

CHAIR: SANCO C/3, Health Threats, for points 1 and 3 of the agenda;
SANCO G/4, Food, Alert System and Training, for point 2 of the agenda

PARTICIPANTS: EWRS contact points, RASFF contact points, SANCO C3, G4, ECDC, EFSA, EU Reference Laboratory for STEC, WHO EURO,

Objective of the meeting:

DG SANCO organised this special audio conference on the Shiga toxin-producing *E. coli* (STEC) outbreak in Germany to provide update of the situation and investigations ongoing in the Member States since the last meeting on 30 May.

1. Update of the epidemiological situation

The German EWRS contact point, represented by the Robert Koch Institute (RKI), gave an update on the epidemiological situation as follows:

796 reported enterohaemorrhagic *Escherichia coli* (EHEC) (including 3 deaths) and 373 reported haemolytic uremic syndrome (HUS) cases (including 6 deaths); 72% of the cases are female. No overlap between HUS cases and EHEC cases reported, because they are notified separately in Germany.

Only a relatively small number of the cases, less than 100, have been confirmed with STEC: 0104; it is expected that more cases will be confirmed with STEC: 0104 in the coming days.

No evidence that the number of cases is decreasing. There exists a delay in reporting. Number of EHEC cases seems to be still under-estimated. Also an increase in HUS cases is expected to occur in the coming days. Case control studies have been carried out in Germany last week and results obtained underpin the aforementioned trend. The RKI issued last week public warnings on EHEC and HUS infections having occurred in Germany.

Treatment capacity for HUS cases is at its limits in some hospitals in the Northern part of Germany; patients had to be transferred to hospitals in other Länder (regions) in Germany. Overall, the German healthcare services can still handle the situation. There is no need for requesting treatment capacities to be made available in other Member States.

The Swedish EWRS contact point reported 41 confirmed EHEC cases of which 15 have developed HUS (73% female); one HUS patient died.

A cohort study is ongoing. The results are expected at the end of the week.

New cases still occur daily; too early to conclude that the number of cases is decreasing.

The Spanish EWRS contact point reported one case (male, 43 years old). He stayed in Germany in the Hamburg area from the 9 to 13 May. Since 20 May is in intensive care treatment.

The Danish EWRS contact point reported a total of 14 STEC cases (50% female), of these 7 cases are diagnosed with HUS.

The Norwegian EWRS contact point reported one suspected case (male, 40 years old) with bloody diarrhoea. He had no travel history to Germany but received visitors from Germany during the incubation period.

Switzerland notified through the International Health Regulations (IHR) two confirmed cases (one female) with travel history to Germany. One of them is vegetarian and ate only salad and vegetables in Germany.

WHO Euro mentioned that they have contacted the U.S. under IHR for further information on three U.S. cases which were communicated on; so far they did not receive a reply from U.S. side.

The ECDC informed that they have raised their emergency operations to level 1 to cope with the activities required by the outbreak; the Head of the preparedness and response Unit is in the lead of emergency response coordination.

They announced that they will provide to DG SANCO a synoptic overview on the cases reported through EPIS and EWRS every day at 11:00 a.m.; DG SANCO will then circulate the synopsis through EWRS.

ECDC will develop an EU case definition for HUS.

It will prepare, in collaboration with EFSA, a scientific report on the outbreak.

2. Investigation into the source of infection

SANCO informed that the STEC outbreak was discussed in the meeting of the Standing Committee on the Food Chain and Animal Health (SCOFCAH), which was still ongoing at the time of the audio-conference.

DE, Federal Institute for Risk Assessment (BfR): an update was given at the SCOFCAH meeting today. The final results of the Spanish cucumbers will be available tonight or tomorrow. There are 6 more samples from different vegetables positive for STEC, but none for serotype 0104 (up to 532 samples taken).

DK: the results of the batch of suspected cucumbers with Danish origin are negative (30 samples were taken).

BE asks clarification from DE as press releases from the competent authority in Hamburg are contradicting the statements of the German representative.

ES asks about the origin of the underlying samples where results have been obtained as the correspondence to RASFF notifications is not clear.

DE, BfR: cannot trace the samples back to the spot; will come back to the question after the BfR representatives have travelled back from the SCOFCAH meeting in Brussels to their offices.

NL points out that further details on the investigation have been added to RASFF notification 2011/0707.

WHO Euro mentioned that vegetables with EHEC contamination have probably been exposed to faecal contamination and then not only serotype 0104 could be a causative agent.

ES reads out the protocol of the audioconference from 27 May 2010, where it is stated in point 2 "*(a) Organic cucumbers from Malaga distributed to DE and DK, serotype 0104 confirmed (b) Non-organic cucumber from Almeria distributed to DE, serotype 0104 confirmed*" and asks to correct the protocol as this must be due to a mistake as the serotype 0104 was not confirmed.

It is agreed that the statement on the confirmation of serotype 0104 included in the protocol of 27 May 2010 is a mistake and that this should be clearly stated in the summary record of the audio-conference of today.

The ECDC announced that following requests from Member States they will prepare a summary table of all current cases based on the EWRS notifications. This table is intended to be used for public communication. An EU case definition is foreseen to be distributed by tonight or tomorrow to the Member States.

DE, RKI gives an overview on the ongoing epidemiological studies.

LT asks if AT and BE have imposed trade restrictions to German products.

BE states that no general restrictions have been imposed apart from the suspected establishments.

AT states that no restrictions have been imposed at all.

ES asks for clarification on who is the official representative of Germany.

DE, RKI and BfR explain the administrative structures of Germany.

NL asks for an update of the EC homepage in particular concerning the RASFF.

A terminology question arises, whether one should quote the agent as EHEC, STEC or VTEC. As EHEC is a clinical terminology, it should not be used in food samples. STEC would be more appropriate.

3. Conclusions and next steps

- ECDC will develop an EU case definition for haemolytic uremic syndrome (HUS) shortly;
- ECDC will establish, on a daily basis and from tomorrow onwards, a synoptic table on the human cases reported through EWRS and EPIS and make it available to DG SANCO for further dissemination through EWRS by 11:00 a.m. every morning;
- ECDC will prepare, in collaboration with EFSA, a scientific report on the outbreak; this report will also include public health advice;
- The next audio-conference will be held tomorrow, 1 June.