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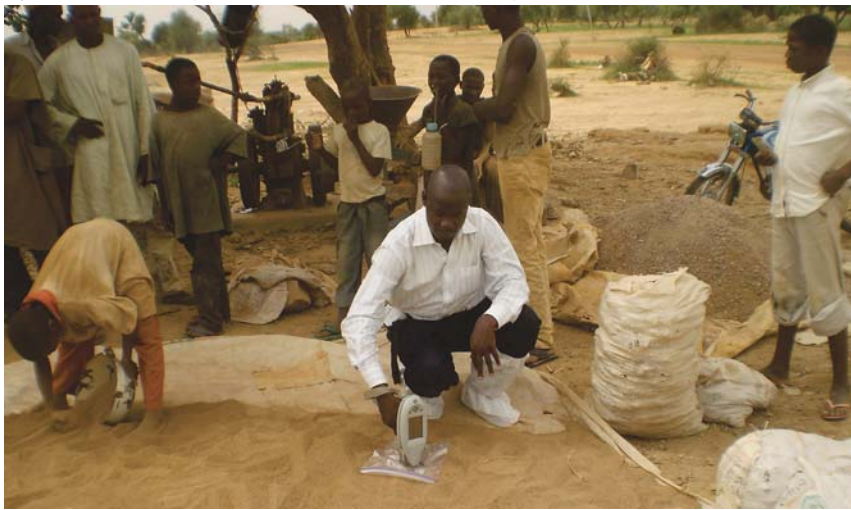
News

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News from the African Field Epidemiology Network

RESIDENTS OF NIGERIA FELTP PARTICIPATE IN MANAGEMENT OF LEAD POISONING OUTBREAK

By Dr. Patrick Nguku- Resident Advisor, Nigeria FELTP



Dr. Suleiman Haladu- a Resident of the Nigeria Field Epidemiology and Laboratory Training Program (NFELTP) determining lead soil contamination levels using XRF machine in Zamfara State, Nigeria

Residents of the Nigeria Field Epidemiology and Laboratory Training Program (NFELTP) formed part of the rapid response team of the Nigeria Federal Ministry of Health (FMOH), following reports of a suspected lead poisoning outbreak in Zamfara State, North West Nigeria. The team included experts from Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Nigeria and CDC Atlanta. The Residents participated in investigation and response activities including initial descriptive epidemiology, screening of blood lead levels in people in affected villages, environmental lead level determination, defining the magnitude of the outbreak, clinical care, determining the effect of the outbreak on animals, and community health education.

NFELTP residents learned new skills in the use of lead care 11 real time blood lead analyzer and the use of XRF- a real time heavy metal analyzer and a key instrument for environmental assessment.

The lead poisoning outbreak was first reported in March 2010. By 8 May 2010, FMOH had received over 200 cases of suspected lead poisoning. The cases involved children under five years who presented with non-specific symptoms like nausea, irritability, vomiting, and convulsions. So far, over 500 cases have been reported with nearly 200 deaths.

Nearly all the children who were tested in the affected villages had high blood lead levels. More than 90% of them needed chelation- a medical procedure to lower the lead

levels in the body. Most of the houses screened had high levels of environmental lead contamination.

Residents also tested blood lead levels of animals like goats, sheep, and chicken and discovered that animals too were affected. This raises the concerns of lead contamination in the food chain.

Response activities including environmental remediation efforts and other response activities have been slow due to heavy rains in Zamfara State.

Lead poisoning is a medical condition caused by increased levels of heavy metal lead in the body. In children, lead causes brain damage, learning problems, slow growth, convulsions, and death if lead levels are high. Adults experience reproductive problems, kidney damage, memory loss, low concentration levels, and other health problems. ❖

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MESSAGE FROM AFENET'S EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



Dear readers,
Welcome to this issue of the AFENET newsletter and thank you for supporting

public health training in Africa.

A news report in a Ugandan newspaper in September highlighted a major threat to Africa's health workforce; the escalating flight of skilled health workers to countries outside Africa in search of greener pastures. However, I am pleased to note that the Field Epidemiology and Laboratory Training Programs (FELTPs) in the Network have been able to contribute to training public health professionals, 85% of whom remain in their home countries and support their local health systems. In line with the contribution of FELTPs in the Network, the lead story focuses on the participation of Residents of the Nigeria FELTP in managing the lead poisoning outbreak in Nigeria.

You will also read about two training workshops which AFENET supported; one on Anthrax management by laboratorians using the "One Health" approach and the other- Strengthening Laboratory Management Training towards Accreditation (SLMTA) in Zimbabwe. AFENET is cognizant of the role of effective diagnostics and skilled laboratory personnel in the management of epidemics, and we hope that the training workshops will contribute to building a stronger laboratory workforce.

The newsletter also carries an interview with one of the Managing Editors of the Pan African Medical Journal- Dr. Raoul Kamadjou, as he explains PAMJ's latest achievement; the article-level metrics.

Enjoy your reading. ❖

David Mukanga

LABORATORIAN TRAINED IN ANTHRAX MANAGEMENT USING "ONE HEALTH" APPROACH

By Dr. Monday Busuulwa- Medical Epidemiologist, AFENET Secretariat

A total of 29 laboratorians from human, domestic animal, and wildlife sectors received skills in basic techniques in rapid diagnostic screening of Anthrax during a training workshop organized by the Uganda Anthrax National Task Force, under the auspices of AFENET and the RESPOND project of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). The "One Health Laboratory Training" was conducted from 13-14 September 2010 in Kasese District- South Western Uganda. It focused on using the "One Health" approach in response and control of the current Anthrax outbreak in Queen Elizabeth National Park. The "One Health" approach aims at addressing disease demands for effective

20 TRAINED DURING SECOND SLMTA TRAINING IN ZIMBABWE

By Mr. Ndlovu Nqobile- Laboratory Project Officer, AFENET Secretariat

Twenty people from 10 laboratories participated in the second training workshop on Strengthening Laboratory Management Towards Accreditation (SLMTA) in Harare, Zimbabwe from 30 August- 3 September 2010. The training was jointly facilitated by AFENET and Zimbabwe National Quality Assurance Programme (ZINQAP).

The workshop aimed at enhancing the participants' laboratory management skills to advance the implementation of the World Health Organization (WHO)'s Laboratory Accreditation Scheme.

By the end of the workshop, three Improvement Projects (IP)s were assigned to each participant for implementation over the next three months. The projects focus on topics like Laboratory Safety Audit, developing Standard Operating Procedures (SOP)s, and Quality Control and maintenance logs. ❖

detection, management, and prevention through inter-sectoral and cross-sectoral collaboration among the human, animal, and environmental health sectors. Previously, these sectors operated independently; but the increasing threat of zoonotic diseases has necessitated their collaboration.

The participants were drawn from Kasese and Rubirizi Districts which are proximal to Queen Elizabeth National Park where the Anthrax outbreak was reported. They learnt techniques in sample collection, processing and transportation of samples for further laboratory investigations and analysis. ❖



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1. Staff of the AFENET Secretariat enjoy themselves at Bujagali Falls- Jinja, Uganda during the Annual Secretariat Staff Retreat which was held from 22-24 September 2010
2. Some of the Residents of Nigeria FELTP- Dr. Tsofo Ahmed (facing camera) and Mr. Matthias Yango (in white cap), together with staff of Ministry of Health during the lead poisoning outbreak in Zamfara State, North West Nigeria
3. Participants of the training workshop on Strengthening Laboratory Management Towards Accreditation (SLMTA) during a group discussion. The workshop was held in Harare, Zimbabwe from 30 August- 3 September 2010
4. (L-R) Dr. Melissa Dahlke (AFENET), Ms. Emmanuelle Espié, and Mr. Antoine Durupt- Project Coordinator and Program Operations Manager of the the African Cholera Surveillance Network (Africhol) at Agence de Médecine Préventive (AMP) during a planning meeting at the AFENET Secretariat on 13 September 2010
5. Trainees of the Uganda Program collect samples from a dead hippopotamus during the Anthrax outbreak investigation in Kasese District, Uganda

Established in 2005 as a non-profit organisation, the African Field Epidemiology Network (AFENET), partners with Ministries of Health in Africa, non-government organizations, international agencies, private sector, and other public health agencies to ensure effective prevention and control of epidemics and other public health priority problems in Africa, by strengthening and expanding applied epidemiology and laboratory capacity.

Pan African Medical Journal (PAMJ) adopts article-level metrics system



The Pan African Medical Journal (PAMJ) this month introduced an advanced article-level metrics system which will allow authors and readers to track the progress of any article published in the journal using data on the number of times an article was accessed, downloaded, shared, recommended, and from which geographical location. AFENET's Editor, **Ms. Anita Tibasaaga** spoke to one of PAMJ's Managing Editors- Dr. Raoul Kamadjeu about the new system.

Question: What is the PAMJ article-level metrics system?

The article-level metric system is a tool to measure the impact factor of an article or publication in PAMJ, as opposed to basing on the impact factor of a journal in which the article is published. Article-level metrics measure the impact at the article level by tracking, for example, citations, web usage or statistics (access, emails, downloads), social bookmarking (Connotea, Citolike, Digg), blogging, commenting, user rating system, and echoes by newspapers. Article-level metrics is not a new system; the Public Library of Science (PLOS) and other publishers are currently using it.

Question: Why has PAMJ adopted this system?

PAMJ has been using the article-level metrics since August 2010. We adopted the system because we believe it is unfair that sometimes the only judges of an article are a couple of reviewers and editors. PAMJ is a web native and relatively new journal; we don't have a paper legacy system so it is easy for us to integrate new technologies. We have a strong team of dedicated IT experts to support the adoption and integration of new technologies. We currently provide article usage statistics like monthly and yearly access (HTML view, PDF downloads, emailed), location of people accessing the article and other user-rating statistics and comments. Our team is following these developments very carefully and we will surely register improvement in the system soon. So far we have received very positive feedback from authors.

Question: Will this new system help to establish PAMJ's importance as a medical journal?

This new system certainly anchors PAMJ's position as a modern medical journal. I am not aware of any other journals in Africa providing this kind of statistics. Of course the quality of the article, based on rigorous peer review and strict editorial policy remains the core of our quality assurance. Article-level metrics provide very powerful information for authors.

Question: How unique is this system when compared to the Impact Factor method of determining a journal's importance?

The Impact Factor looks at the journal as a whole while article-level metrics focus on an article. Insignificant articles may get published in journals with high impact factors while high quality papers may emerge from obscure journals. Articles should be judged for what they stand for and not hide behind the glow of the journal. I am confident that authors will soon be more interested in article-level metrics. A researcher would be frustrated if after all his hard work, his paper was accessed by only 15 people from six countries, rather than 20,000 people from 110 countries.

Question: How will the article-level metrics system promote scientific research and publication in Africa?

Article level metrics is just the first step. Other aspects that need to be considered include author's metrics, institution metrics, and reputation metrics. Article level metrics will promote publication in Africa the same way it will promote publication elsewhere by providing quantitative measures of the impact of an article. I will not be surprised to see some of these metrics popping up in CVs very soon.

Question: Who can view the report generated by the article-level metrics system?

Article-level metrics are accessible to all; from an article's full text to the abstract pages.

Question: What are article usage statistics?

Article usage statistics refers to a range of information on how often the article is being used. The term "usage" in the digital world meant: html access, PDF downloads, email forward. Now an article can be blogged, bookmarked in social media like Facebook, CiteUlike, Connotea, Twitter, news media, users' comments, and users' ratings.

Log onto: www.panafrican-med-journal.com to view article-level metrics