

Cholera surveillance for health care workers

Transcript of online course

MODULE 4

Surveillance to monitor cholera outbreaks

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Welcome to Module 4 of the GTFCC online course on cholera surveillance for health care workers.

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In this module, we will dive into how to implement surveillance to monitor a cholera outbreak.

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While this module focuses on the specificities of cholera surveillance to monitor an outbreak, general principles for health care workers to implement cholera surveillance addressed in Module 2 also apply - these principles always apply. Therefore, if you have not yet already done so, we encourage you to take module 2 of this course before taking this module.

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After completing this module, you will know how to implement surveillance to monitor a cholera outbreak, including

- How to identify patients with suspected cholera;
- Which patients with suspected cholera to test;
- And, how often to report patients with suspected cholera.

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Let's start with a refresher on cholera surveillance to monitor an outbreak.

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Surveillance is implemented to monitor a cholera outbreak when there is an ongoing outbreak in a local geographic area.

Health authorities regularly share information and updates on the local cholera situation.

Make sure to stay up-to-date, that way at any point in time you will know the cholera situation in your local geographic area and whether you should implement cholera surveillance to monitor an outbreak.

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Implementing surveillance to monitor a cholera outbreak is to continuously generate information to guide near real time effective multisectoral interventions to end the outbreak.

To implement cholera surveillance to monitor an outbreak, identify, test, and report any patient with suspected cholera in accordance with the recommendations of this module.

This applies as long as there is a cholera outbreak in your local geographic area. If the cholera situation changes, for example the outbreak is over, how to implement cholera surveillance evolves. We invite you to learn more about this in Modules 3 and 5.

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Let's see how to identify patients with suspected cholera when surveillance is implemented to monitor an outbreak.

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When surveillance is implemented to monitor an outbreak, a suspected cholera case is any patient who has acute watery diarrhoea (AWD) or who died from AWD.

If you are unsure about how to identify AWD, we encourage you to go back to module 2.

There are no additional criteria on age or severe dehydration to identify patients with suspected cholera among patients who have AWD. This is because when there is a cholera outbreak in a local geographic area, it is likely that a patient with AWD has cholera. This allows a sensitive and comprehensive monitoring of the outbreak to guide response measures effectively.

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Let's look into the strategy to test patients with suspected cholera when surveillance is to monitor an outbreak.

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When surveillance is to monitor a cholera outbreak, it is not necessary to test all patients who meet the definition of a suspected cholera case. Only some patients with suspected cholera need to be tested for cholera.

The reason why it is not necessary to test all patients with suspected cholera is because this is not required to treat the patients. Treatment of patients with suspected cholera depends on their dehydration level, not on laboratory results.

However, it is essential to test some of the patients with suspected cholera in order to monitor the outbreak trends. In addition, this is also necessary to monitor the circulating strain including its susceptibility to antimicrobials to continue to treat patients effectively.

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If Rapid Diagnostic Tests (RDT) are available at your health facility, each day, the first three patients who meet the definition of a suspected cholera case are tested with a RDT.

The time of arrival is the only criteria to select 3 patients with suspected cholera for testing. Do not apply any additional criteria such as age or severity. This would bias the monitoring of the outbreak trend.

This daily sampling scheme applies throughout the outbreak.

If on a given day, less than 3 patients meeting the definition of a suspected cholera case are seen at your facility, then test all patients meeting the case definition.

If on a given day, no patient meeting the definition of a suspected cholera case is seen at your facility, then no patient is tested on that day.

Periodically, some samples tested positive by RDT will be subject to additional laboratory testing. On this, follow the directions of your health authority.

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If RDTs are not available at your health facility, each week, collect and send samples for laboratory testing on the first three patients meeting the definition of a suspected cholera case.

The time of arrival is the only criteria to select 3 patients with suspected cholera for laboratory testing. Do not apply any additional criteria such as age or severity. This would bias the monitoring of the outbreak trend.

Apply this weekly sampling scheme throughout the outbreak.

If on a given week, less than 3 patients meeting the definition of a suspected cholera case are seen at your facility, then collect samples for laboratory testing on all of them.

If on a given week, no patient meeting the definition of a suspected cholera case is seen at your facility, then no patient is tested for cholera on that week.

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Lastly, let's look into the reporting of patients with suspected cholera.

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Collect standard information on all patients meeting the definition of a suspected cholera case seen at your facility and report this information to your health authority at the end of the week.

Reporting all patients with suspected cholera on a weekly basis is essential for a timely monitoring of the outbreak trends in order to guide interventions accordingly.

If you are unsure about the standard information that should be collected on patients with suspected cholera, we invite you to go back to Module 2.

If on a given week, no patient meeting the definition of a suspected cholera case was seen in your facility, the absence of cases should also be reported to your health authority at the end of the week. This is zero reporting.

At the beginning or towards the end of the outbreak, your health authority may request you to report patients with suspected cholera more frequently, for example on a daily basis, if so, follow the directions of your health authority.

To report patients with suspected cholera to your health authority, use the reporting channels and mechanisms in place at your facility. For example, there may be a reporting focal point.

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As we wrap up this module, here are the important points to remember.

In local geographic areas where there is an ongoing cholera outbreak, surveillance aims to monitor the outbreak in order to continuously guide effective response measures.

When surveillance is implemented to monitor a cholera outbreak, all patients with AWD are suspected cholera cases.

Some of the patients meeting the definition of a suspected cholera case are tested.

If RDTs are available, the first three patients with suspected cholera seen each day are tested.

If RDTs are not available, the first three patients with suspected cholera seen each week are tested.

In addition, standard information is collected on all patients meeting the definition of a suspected cholera case and is reported on a weekly basis.

If no patient with suspected cholera was seen at a facility on a given week, this is also reported on a weekly basis.

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Before moving on to the next module, we encourage you to take a short quiz. There are three questions in this quiz.

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Question 1. To monitor a cholera outbreak, a patient with suspected cholera is any patient:

- a) Aged 2 years old or older with Acute Watery Diarrhoea (AWD).
- b) With AWD and severe dehydration.
- c) Aged 2 years old or older with AWD and severe dehydration.
- d) With AWD.

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The correct answer is d. When surveillance is to monitor an outbreak, any patient with AWD is a suspected cholera case.

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Question 2. Select all that apply. To monitor a cholera outbreak:

- a) Any patient with suspected cholera is reported daily.
- b) Any patient with suspected cholera is reported weekly.
- c) The absence of patient with suspected cholera is reported daily.
- d) The absence of patient with suspected cholera is reported weekly.

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The correct answers are b and d. When surveillance is to monitor an outbreak, all patients meeting the definition of a suspected cholera case are reported weekly and the absence of patients meeting the definition of a suspected cholera case is also reported weekly.

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Question 3. This is the last question. To monitor a cholera outbreak, any patient with AWD is tested for cholera. Is this a) true or b) false?

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The correct answer is b. This is false. When surveillance is to monitor an outbreak, it is not necessary to test all patients with AWD. Only some of the patients meeting the definition of a suspected cholera case are tested.

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We have now completed this module.