



Emerging and Reemerging Infectious Diseases, Region of the Americas

Vol. 2, No. 8—26 February 2004

Outbreak of Diarrheic Disease from Rotavirus in El Salvador

According to our review of the information available on acute diarrheic syndrome in El Salvador, the incidence of diarrhea is less than it was in 2002 and 2003. On the other hand, taking into account that the number of samples analyzed by the Central Laboratory has not varied significantly with respect to 2003, we can observe an increase in the percentage of positive results for rotavirus.

Up to Epidemiological Week (EW) 7 (21 February 2004), the Central Laboratory studied 233 samples and obtained positive results for rotavirus in 48.4% of them. During EW 7 alone, 133 samples were analyzed, resulting in 53% of those positive for rotavirus.

A total of 108 confirmed cases have been reported of diarrhea from rotavirus, of which 86% have occurred in children under two years of age. The departments most affected have been Santa Ana (with 58.3% of the cases) and San Salvador (with 20.4%). To date, no deaths have been reported.

To deal with this situation, epidemiological surveillance had been strengthened through the daily monitoring of hospital admissions and deaths from acute diarrhea. Efforts are underway to provide reagents for the diagnosis and identification of the strain currently in circulation.

The primary mode of transmission for rotavirus is fecal-oral. The virus is stable in the environment and can remain viable for an extended period, which favors transmission from contact with contaminated surfaces, water, or food. Any prevention and control measures taken should take these aspects into account.

No specific treatment exists for diarrhea. At present, two vaccines are being investigated (testing currently in Phase III), with preliminary results promising in terms of effectiveness and safety. The main strategy in the event of outbreaks is based on reducing mortality from diarrhea, which is generally caused by the accompanying dehydration. Approximately 1 out of every 40 children with gastroenteritis from rotavirus will require hospitalization for the administration of intravenous fluids. Compliance with norms for oral

rehydration, as contained in the tried-and-tested [IMCI](#) recommendations, is extremely important.

For more information, see the PAHO directories on [IMCI](#) and [Diarrheal/Enteric Diseases](#).

Sources

- [Ministerio de Salud Pública y Asistencia Social](#) de El Salvador, Epidemiología, *Consolidado Nacional de Vigilancia Diaria*. (Ministry of Public Health of Social Assistance of El Salvador, Epidemiology, *Consolidated Results for Daily National Surveillance*; site in Spanish).
- Report to PAHO from the Ministry of Public Health of Social Assistance of El Salvador.