



Epidemiological Alert: Poliomyelitis

(20 October 2010)

The Global Polio Eradication Initiative is currently registering 574 cases caused by wild poliovirus type 1 (WPV1) and 3 (WPV3) in non-endemic countries: Angola, central-Asian countries, Russia, Chad, Sudan, Democratic Republic of Congo, Nepal, and western-African countries.

In fact, Kazakhstan has reported its first wild poliovirus case after more than 15 years of transmission interruption of the virus in the country. As of 12 October 2010, there have been a total of 13 wild poliovirus cases reported in the Russian Federation, with the most recent case's onset of symptoms starting on 18 September.

The total number of wild poliovirus cases in Tajikistan, from 1 January to 12 October 2010, was 458, with the most recent case's onset of symptoms starting on 4 July 2010. Furthermore, this is the first poliomyelitis case that has been recorded in Europe since 2002, when the region was certified as a poliomyelitis-free zone.

The Americas region has remained free of wild poliovirus since 1991, when the last case was recorded.

The current transmission situation, in today's globalized world, represents a threat if vaccination coverage levels above 95% are not guaranteed in countries with no polio transmission. Also, epidemiological surveillance systems also remain alert to the risk of introduction of imported cases of wild poliovirus in the region.

Recommendations

Given that the occurrence of a wild poliovirus outbreak would represent an enormous setback for public health in our region, the Pan American Health Organization recommends:

- Evaluating vaccination coverage at the local, sub-national, and national levels to determine the risk according to susceptible population.
- Evaluating compliance with epidemiological surveillance indicators for acute flaccid paralysis during the last 5 years, by department or province, according to PAHO's recommendations.
- Reporting and conducting immediate clinical-epidemiological investigation for all acute flaccid paralysis cases in people under 15 years of age, while guaranteeing sample take and delivery to a reference laboratory.
- Conducting active tracing of acute flaccid paralysis cases.
- Promoting vaccination to all people who travel to polio-transmission areas, as well as providing recommendations to all travelers.
- Training and involving professional associations, alerting them about this risk.

References

1. Wild Poliovirus Weekly Updated. Global Polio Eradication Initiative. 13 October 2010 (Data as 12 October 2010).
2. Polio in Tajikistan – Update, Global Alert and Response, available at http://www.who.int/csr/don/2010_07_23/en/index.html