



FOREWORD

The 2014 Ebola epidemic in West Africa has fast become an international public health emergency, yet there have been 23 Ebola virus outbreaks prior to the 2014 epidemic, most of which occurred in very secluded rural parts of equatorial Africa. A summary of Ebola disease outbreaks to date, with special emphasis on the 2014 epidemic, including possible reasons why it is so severe compared to previous outbreaks, is given in this issue.

Closer to home, South Africa's HIV epidemic marches on, yet monitoring HIV-related mortality in South Africa has proved to be particularly challenging. In this issue, the national reporting system and estimator models of HIV-mortality are critically reviewed, and recommendations to improve the accuracy of the data are given. The topic of HIV is further explored in the broader context of sexually transmitted infections (STIs) which facilitate the transmission and acquisition of HIV. Surveillance data on STIs in Johannesburg are given for the 2013/2014 period and emphasise the high rate of HIV co-infection in STI patients.

The 2014/2015 malaria season in South Africa has begun, and the malaria control programmes in Limpopo, Mpumalanga and KwaZulu-Natal provinces are just completing their annual insecticide spraying rounds. In order to make malaria control more efficient, new or better insecticide formulations are currently being developed, and this issue includes a recent evaluation of a new long-lasting insecticide formulation for controlling malaria vector mosquitoes.

Surveillance reports in this issue detail the 2013 rotavirus and severe acute respiratory illness (SARI) incidences and trends in South Africa. Importantly, the 2013 rotavirus season may signify a biennial "high" season, and the SARI surveillance programme has enabled descriptions of the prevalence of additional respiratory pathogens in patients with different clinical presentations at enhanced surveillance sites.

This is the final issue for 2014 and we wish all our readers and contributors a safe and joyous holiday season.

Basil Brooke, Editor

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