

Meningococcal disease update

Cases of meningococcal disease continue to be reported from across the country. A slow increase in case numbers is being seen. This increase may indicate the start of the meningococcal season. Numbers are expected to increase during July and peak during the months of August to October. There are inherent delays in laboratory-based reporting, which lags behind clinical reports.

By the end of epidemiological week 23, a total of 66 laboratory-confirmed cases was reported to the Centre for Respiratory Diseases and Meningitis (CRDM), NICD (Table 1). Eighteen cases have been reported in the <1-year-old age group this year so far. This is similar to the number of cases for the equivalent time period and age group in 2012 (n=20).

The reported cases were caused by diverse serogroups, which is in keeping with sporadic endemic disease in the country. Serogroup data were available for 28/66 (42%) of cases. Serogroup B and W135 have been identified most commonly this year (6/28, 21% serogroup B and 14/28, 50% serogroup W135). There were also four cases of serogroup Y and three cases of serogroup C disease. One isolate was non-groupable.

Meningococcal disease occurs throughout the year, but the incidence is highest in the late winter and

early spring. Clinicians should have a high index of suspicion for meningococcal disease in patients who present with acute febrile illness. Disease typically has a rapid progression and should be managed as a medical emergency, requiring urgent antibiotics in order to reduce morbidity and mortality. All cases of suspected meningococcal disease (meningitis and sepsis) should be notified telephonically to the Department of Health.

Table 1. Number of laboratory-confirmed meningococcal disease cases reported until end of week 23, 2012 and 2013, by province

Province	Year	
	2012	2013
Eastern Cape	11	15
Free State	0	5
Gauteng	30	15
KwaZulu-Natal	10	13
Limpopo	1	1
Mpumalanga	1	1
Northern Cape	0	1
North West	2	2
Western Cape	19	13
	74	66

Source: Centre for Respiratory Diseases and Meningitis, NICD-NHLS.