World Health Organization
Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean

Weekly Epidemiological Monitor

Volume 4 Issue 13 &14, Sunday 03 April 2011

Current major event

New cases of avian influenza A (H5N1) in Egypt

During the last three months (January-March, 2011), the Ministry of Health in Egypt reported a total of 18 new cases of human infection with avian influenza A (H5N1) virus. Five of them were fatal. This brings the total number of reported cases of human infection with avian influenza A (H5N1) in Egypt to 137. Of these cases confirmed in Egypt to date, 47 have been fatal.

Editorial note

During the current winter season in Egypt, the sudden upsurge in human cases of avian influenza A(H5N1) *(reported in weekly epidemiological monitor, vol-4; issue-2 and 9)* continued, with 5 new cases reported in January (including 1 death), 6 cases in February (including 2 deaths) and another 7 new cases reported in March (including 2 deaths). In December 2010, seven new cases of human infection with avian influenza A (H5N1) were reported heralding this sudden increase.

Despite this trend of seasonal surge which is being observed in Egypt for the last three consecutive years, 2009 to 2011 *(Please see the graph)* , the age-specific infection and death profiles among confirmed human cases of avian influenza A (H5N1) have not shown any marked difference. Children younger than 15 years continue to comprise majority of all newly reported cases and the death rate in this particular age group still remains far less than compared to above 15 years age group.

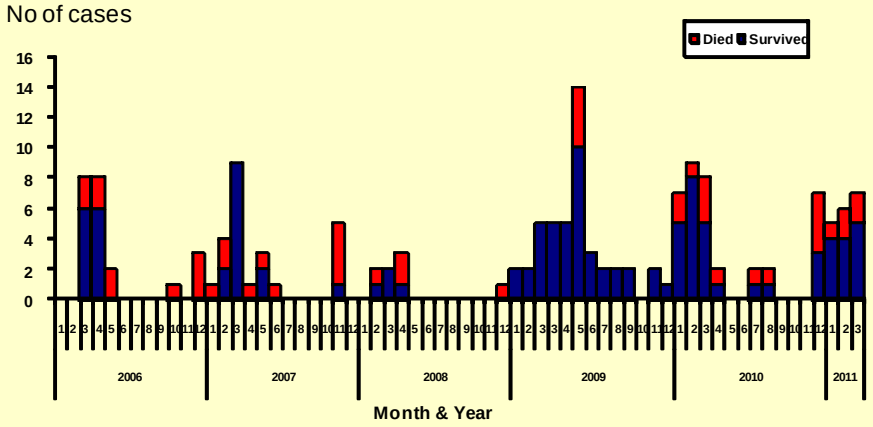
Although, the number of cases, reported in 2010, dropped (by about 25%) compared to the previous year, the case fatality rate increased by about four folds in 2010 compared to 2009 (44% in 2010 versus 10% in 2009). This year, of the 18 new cases reported so far, five were fatal (CFR:27.7%). However, it is too early to make any comparison between the fatality rates reported this year with the previous two years.

There is no doubt that, without an effective control strategy, the highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) virus will continue to spread in Egypt and pose a major threat to public health.

Since the first laboratory-confirmed human case of avian influenza (AI) was reported in Egypt on 20 March 2006, human cases infected with the virus has now been reported from all the 29 Governorates in the country, meaning that the virus is now fully entrenched in the country. Continued human exposure to and infection with highly pathogenic avian influenza virus H5N1 increases the likelihood that this virus may mutate or re-assort in a way that will result in efficient human-to-human transmission.

The avian influenza A(H5N1) virus remains and will continue to pose potentially a serious pandemic threat as long as there is no proof that the virus has lost its strength for an efficient human-to-human transmission. Consequently, the basic strategy should be to control infections in poultry and limit the opportunity for humans to be exposed and become infected with AI virus.

Reported human cases of avian influenza A (H5N1) in Egypt, Jan 2006- March 2011 (n =137)



Age distribution of confirmed human cases of Influenza A/ (H5N1) in Egypt

Age group	Cases	Deaths	CFR (%)
< 5 yrs	43	2	4.6
5 to 15 yrs	33	5	15.1
>15 to 30 yrs	39	23	58.9
>30 to 45 yrs	18	12	66.6
>45 yrs	4	3	75
Total	**137**	**45**	**32.8**

Update on outbreaks

in the Eastern Mediterranean Region

Chikungunya in Yemen, **Cutaneous Anthrax** in S. Sudan, **A(H5N1)** in Egypt

Current public health events of international concern
[cumulative N° of cases (deaths), **CFR %**]

Avian influenza	
Egypt	[137 (45), **32.8%**]
Indonesia	[176 (145), **82.4 %**]
Viet Nam	[119(59), **49.6%**
China	[40(26), **65%**]
Global total	[543 (318), **58.6%**]
Cholera	
Haiti	[243197*(4626), 1.9 **%**]
Chad	[2508 (111), **4.4%**]
Cutaneous Anthrax	
S. Sudan	[19(0)]#
Meningococcal disease	
Chad	[923(57), **6.1 %**]#
Chikungunya fever	
Yemen	[15000(104), **0.6 %**]#
Yellow fever	
Uganda	[226(53), **23.4 %**]
Sierra Leone	[2(0),]

*CFR=Case-Fatality Rate; * Number of hospital visits; # Suspected cases only*

Published by the World Health Organization (WHO), Eastern Mediterranean Regional Office (EMRO), Cairo, Egypt.
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