

Current major event

Localized meningitis outbreak in Sudan

A localized outbreak of meningococcal meningitis has been reported from one of the localities (district) in West Darfur state of Sudan. From 01 January to 19 April, a total of 42 suspected cases including 7 deaths (CFR:16.7%) have been reported from this locality (Umdokhon) in West Darfur state. The predominant pathogen causing this outbreak has been found to be *Neisseria meningitidis* (Nm) serogroup A.

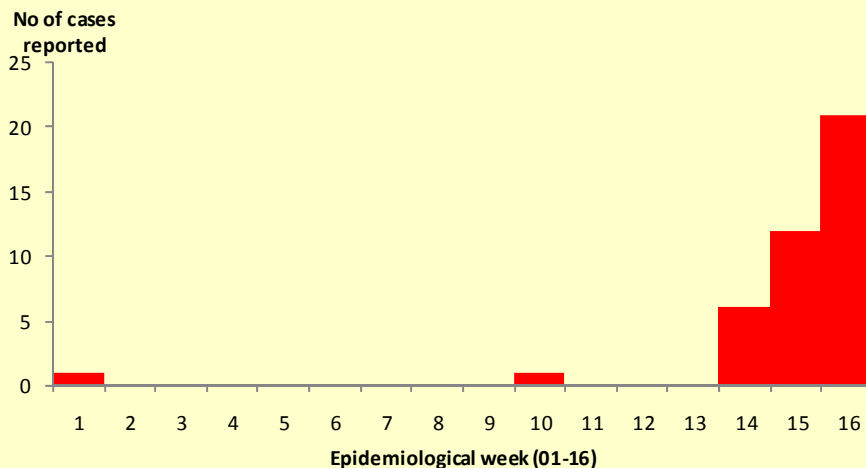
Editorial note

The current outbreak is localized in a very small geographical area of West Darfur. The estimated population in this area is 99,412. As it appears from the epidemic curve (*please see the graph*), the outbreak is in an evolving stage and only since week no 13, cases have started to increase although sporadic cases were reported since the beginning of the year.

The state of West Darfur (*please see the map*) is a bordering state of Chad where an outbreak of meningococcal meningitis caused by *Neisseria meningitidis* (Nm) serogroup A is ongoing since the beginning of the year. A large number of populations are internally displaced in West Darfur and the frequent population movement between West Darfur and the bordering districts of Chad owing to repeated conflicts in the area might have contributed to the occurrence of this localized outbreak in the state during the current high risk season. However, considering the fact that the outbreak is still in its ascending stage, the disease surveillance system in the state must be credited for detecting the outbreak early which will have a profound impact on prevention of large number of cases and deaths from this outbreak if mass immunization campaigns with appropriate polysaccharide vaccines can be organized and implemented in the affected areas early on.

As the established approach to control epidemic meningitis in countries of African Meningitis Belt is early detection of

Meningococcal meningitis cases reported from Umdokhon, West Darfur, Sudan



Map of West Darfur showing the epi-center of the outbreak



disease and emergency mass immunization of the at-risk population with polysaccharide vaccine once an outbreak has been confirmed, strengthening the surveillance in the nearby bordering districts of West and South Darfur would be critical to prevent spread of this outbreak to other areas of Darfur. Should it happen, there could be a major outbreak in Darfur with catastrophic impact as the area hosts the largest number of internally displaced people (IDPs) in the world with frequent population movement and a very fragile health systems.

For the current outbreak in Umdokhon, standardized case management with appropriate drug regimen will also be essential to limit deaths. Remaining vigilant for the remaining period of the current high risk season with strengthened surveillance for meningococcal disease can not be overemphasized.

Update on outbreaks

in the Eastern Mediterranean Region

Measles in Afghanistan, Somalia, Djibouti and Yemen; Avian Influenza (H5N1) in Egypt ; Meningitis in Sudan

Current public health events of international concern

[cumulative N° of cases (deaths), CFR %]

Avian influenza

China	[42(28), 66.7%]
Egypt	[167 (60), 35.9%]
Indonesia	[188 (156), 82.9 %]
Viet Nam	[123(61), 49.5%]
Cambodia	[20(18), 90%]
Bangladesh	[6(0).]
Global total	[602(355), 59%]

Measles

Afghanistan	[261 (0)] #
Somalia	[1046 (na), na%]#
Yemen	[3800(124), 3.3%] #

Lassa fever

Nigeria	[623(70), 11.2 %] #
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Meningococcal meningitis

Chad	[1043(67), 6.4 %] #
Sudan	[42(7), 16.6 %] #

CFR=Case-Fatality Rate;

Suspected cases only