

Part 2

Definitions and Procedures for Reporting and Responding to Cases of Travel Associated Legionnaires' Disease

The following definitions and procedures have been devised in order to improve control and prevention of travel associated legionnaires' disease and to enhance information on the actions taken at accommodation sites when cases are reported to the surveillance scheme's co-ordinating centre in London. The algorithm is shown in Figure 1. The definitions and procedures are in line with operating the surveillance scheme under Decision 2119/98/EC, although any response by individual countries has to be in accordance with their own laws and guidelines for control and prevention of legionnaires' disease. The European guidelines do not currently over-ride national guidelines but through Decision 2119/98/EC it is assumed that harmonisation of procedures will be introduced in all member states.

The guidelines include important procedures for informing the public about clusters of legionnaires' disease cases associated with holiday accommodation. (Paragraph 18).

15. Responsibility of government nominated surveillance collaborators

Collaborators in EWGLINET are nominated by their governments to act as contact points, and represent the authorities responsible for public health actions in the country. Collaborators are nominated from people with scientific experience of legionella and with epidemiological or microbiological responsibility for diagnosis and surveillance of legionella infections in their country.

16. Definitions for reporting

Single cases

- Cases who in the ten days before onset of illness stayed at or visited an accommodation site that has not been associated with any other cases of legionnaires' disease, or cases who stayed at an accommodation site linked to other cases of legionnaires' disease but more than two years previously.

Clusters

- Two or more cases who stayed at or visited the same accommodation site in the ten days before onset of illness and whose onset is within the same two-year period.

If any further cases associated with the cluster site occur more than two years after the last case, they will be reported as new single cases, although the

country of infection will receive information on all previous cases regardless of the time period involved.

17. Reporting procedures

Reporting to the network's co-ordinating centre

Cases are normally reported to the co-ordinating centre in London by the country of residence, (occasionally a report may be made on a patient outside their country of residence) via the password protected secure level of the EWGLI website. Cases should be reported as soon as the epidemiological, microbiological and travel information is obtained. The room number, complete accommodation address and other important information such as known use of showers, whirlpool spas or other recognised exposure risks should try to be obtained from the case or their relatives and provided with the case report or as soon as possible thereafter. Whenever possible the name of the patient (or the initials) and date of birth should be transmitted (separately) in order to facilitate the identification of the exposures. Without satisfactory information on the travel details, it may not be possible to identify the accommodation site in the presumed country of infection, especially in resorts where similar hotel names are used by many different establishments.

Response by the co-ordinating centre in London

The case is entered onto the international database. This is then searched for any other cases linked to the same accommodation site. If none are found, the co-ordinating centre immediately reports the case to the collaborator in the country of infection.

Response by the collaborator in the country of infection

The collaborator in the country of infection should ensure that the site will receive the checklist that outlines good practice for minimising the risk of legionella infection. (Appendix 2) No further follow up procedures at the international level are necessary for a single case of travel associated legionnaires' disease.

Removing hotel names from the database

If after two years, no additional cases of travel associated legionnaires' disease are linked to accommodation sites at which only one case has previously been reported, the name of that hotel or accommodation site is removed from the database accessed by the collaborators.

18. Procedures for clusters

Identification of a cluster is of sufficient importance to warrant an immediate action by the co-ordinating centre in London and the collaborator / public health authorities in the country of infection.

Response by the co-ordinating centre in London

The cluster will be entered onto the international database. All collaborators will be informed immediately of the cluster and any additional cases linked to the

same accommodation site outside the two-year period. WHO will be informed of all clusters associated with accommodation sites both within and outside the surveillance network countries and requested to inform the Ministry of Health in the country concerned if it is outside the European network.

Response by the collaborator and the public health authorities in the country of infection

The collaborator should arrange for the accommodation site to be inspected by a body authorised by the national authority (e.g. a local or regional public health authority) as soon as possible. A risk assessment (according to European or national guidelines) should be requested, followed by an environmental investigation, the implementation of control measures and the drawing up of recommendations against existing or future risks of legionella infection. The risk assessment should include a technical inspection of the site, the implementation of emergency remedial measures and the listing of any corrective actions taken. The collaborator should also ensure that their national authority (e.g. national public health institution or Ministry) is aware of the cluster.

Public disclosure of cluster information

The naming of accommodation sites on the public part of the EWGLI website will be triggered by actions of collaborators and health authorities when they are notified of a cluster associated with their country. By making certain data available to the public, the co-ordinating centre in London is carrying out this function in accordance with agreed procedures in these guidelines. Countries participating in the surveillance scheme believe that protection of their citizens from the risks of infection is paramount and support the decision to publicise accommodation sites when appropriate to do so.

The public is increasingly protected from acquiring travel associated legionnaires' disease through the rapid exchange of information between public health specialists when clusters are detected and the use of standardised control and prevention procedures when responding to the cluster alert. However, if any breakdown in these procedures occur or adverse reports are received about the control measures at the accommodation site, the public have a right to be informed about the situation and the reason for the public disclosure.

19. Risk assessment report

Preliminary report within two weeks

The collaborator should complete Form A. This form specifies whether or not an inspection and risk assessment have been carried out at the accommodation site. It should be returned to the co-ordinating centre in London within two weeks of receipt of the cluster alert. *(The two-week period will commence once the details of the accommodation (i.e. name and address) have been verified as correct by the collaborator in the country of infection).* The report should state whether control measures are in progress and if the hotel remains open or not. On receipt of this report at CDSC, the collaborator in the country of infection

and the country of report of the case(s) will be notified. A reporting form is provided in Appendix 3.

If Form A is not received in the specified time period or the form reports that no risk assessment or control measures have been taken, all collaborators will be informed and a notification of the cluster will be posted on the public part of the EWGLI website. The notification will remain on the website until Form A is received or until it is reported that control measures are in place.

Full report within six weeks of the cluster alert

After a further four weeks, information is expected that outlines what investigations and control measures have been taken at the accommodation site and should include the results of any sampling that took place. A summary reporting form (Form B, Appendix 4) should be completed and returned to CDSC within four weeks of the initial preliminary report. The collaborating centre should also enter the results of the investigation report directly into the surveillance scheme's electronic database for environmental investigation results. If Form B is not received, or it states that control measures are unsatisfactory, a statement to this effect will be placed on the public part of the website and the name of the accommodation site made public. The name of the accommodation site will be removed from the EWGLI website when Form B is received or when control measures are considered to have been satisfactorily implemented.

Collaborators in the country of infection will be reminded 2-3 days in advance of the report deadline of two weeks and four weeks if Forms A or B have not been received. All collaborators will be informed when names of accommodation sites have been removed from the public part of the website. It will be the responsibility of the collaborator in the country of infection (or of the public health authorities) to liaise with the hotel or other site if that accommodation site has had its name posted on the public website. Public information about the accommodation site will be moved to an archive file if after one year the status of the accommodation site has not been resolved.

20. Report of an additional case with date of onset two to six weeks after the first cluster alert

Five day deadline

If an additional case is reported with a date of onset two to six weeks after the first cluster alert, there is a strong probability that guests are continuing to be exposed to legionella at the accommodation site. The co-ordinating centre will immediately contact the collaborator in the country of infection and enquire about control measures at the accommodation site. A response should be provided to the co-ordinating centre within five working days. If none is received, the name of the accommodation will be posted onto the public part of the EWGLI website and will remain there until a report is received that indicates satisfactory control measures have been applied.

21. Report of new cluster cases within two years of environmental investigations

Two year review

If new cluster cases arise within two years from an accommodation site where a report was previously received stating all control measures were satisfactorily implemented, a new and more thorough investigation will be expected. This should be organised by the collaborator / public health authorities in the country of infection. More exhaustive information from the epidemiological follow up of the cases is expected to be sent to the country of infection in order to help in the investigation. The Steering Committee of the surveillance scheme can provide a list of independent experts whom collaborators or their national authorities might wish to consult for a further risk assessment exercise. The results of the new investigation should be reported to the co-ordinating centre in the standard way using forms A and B within two weeks and six weeks. If no reports are received within the outlined time frame the name of the hotel will be made public on the EWGLI website and all national authorities will be informed. As before, the name will be removed once satisfactory control measures have been implemented and reported to the scheme.

22. Follow up of clusters associated with more than one accommodation site

Each year approximately 25-30% of all travel associated cases stay at more than one accommodation site in the 2-10 days before onset of illness for legionnaires' disease, making it difficult to organise follow up of all accommodation sites. For single cases, the recommended procedures should be followed, i.e. distribution of the checklist to each of the sites.

For clusters, an extensive itinerary involving several accommodation sites may be associated with two or more cases and all of these sites may need investigating. Alternatively, one accommodation site from a travel itinerary may also have been used by another case with a different travel itinerary and hence become associated with a cluster. Where multi-sites are associated with a cluster, it is recommended that the network collaborator in the country of infection should prioritise the follow up of these sites and inform the London co-ordinating centre of their actions. Discretion will be used concerning the publication of hotel names on the EWGLI website for these clusters.

23. The role of tour operators in relation to reports of travel associated legionnaires' disease

Through the Package Travel Directive (16), tour operators in Europe have a legal duty to protect the health and welfare of clients within the package they deliver. In the last few years several countries have informed tour operators of clusters and/or single cases because they can play a useful role in helping to identify hotel locations and people who have stayed at them. These guidelines outline a change in policy in relation to reporting to tour operators.

The co-ordinating centre in London no longer routinely reports cases or clusters of travel associated legionnaires' disease to any individual, national or international group of tour operators. However, in the event of a large outbreak of legionnaires' disease or a cluster of three or more cases with onset of infection close together, persons at risk will be informed by the appropriate health authorities. Tour operators very occasionally receive notification of a case of legionnaires' disease directly from a client. In this situation, tour operators should advise the informant to contact their doctor and request the doctor to report the case to the appropriate authority in the country concerned.

It is the responsibility of the collaborator / public health authorities in each participating country to arrange for hotels and other tourist accommodation sites to be informed of the procedures in these guidelines. This may best be achieved through contact with their national hotel associations or tourist authorities. Hotels should be informed that they might be subject to publicity on the EWGLI website, as a consequence of a cluster report to the collaborator in the country of infection. In the event that two week or six week investigation reports are not received in time by the co-ordinating centre or if no action is taken in response to the cluster alert, countries must be aware that details of the cluster will be made public on the EWGLI website. This will allow members of the public and tour operators to make an informed choice whether or not to continue to use the hotel in question.

24. Responding to information requests from lawyers and other individuals

The EWGLINET coordinating centre receives many requests for information on specific incidents or clusters of travel associated legionnaires' disease. These requests come mainly from lawyers, patients and tour operators involved in litigation issues.

The coordinating centre at all times maintains confidentiality of patient data under national and European Data Protection Acts. No names of cases are held on the European database. Environmental investigation results remain the property of the investigating country and cannot be released without their permission.

All requests for information are responded to in the following standardised way:

- The number of cases associated with the incident is provided. No personal details for any of these cases are given.
- An explanation of the actions taken in accordance with the procedures outlined in the EWGLINET European guidelines is provided.
- The name and address of the EWGLINET nominated national official in the country of infection is given to the person requesting information on results of environmental investigations, in order that they may write directly for the information requested.