



EXERCISE

Brown Lagoon

Serial 2.1
Scenario

Overview

4 June 2007

There is an ongoing outbreak of Norovirus in the European Commission. The 14 floor Berlaymont building in rue de la Loi, which houses the European Commission headquarters is the most seriously affected with 267 staff reporting ill today with the disease. The outbreak is believed to have started 3 days ago, and a drinks reception celebrating the 60th birthday of the Irish Commissioner to the EC has been implicated by Belgian health officials in Brussels. Tests at the food company and on any food prepared for but not served at the event are ongoing and all those attending the event are being advised to adhere to strict rules of hygiene to minimise the spread.

The added complications are that 3 commissioners including the health commissioner are believed to have caught the infection. The media have got hold of the story and it is in danger of becoming an embarrassing political news item. Senior Commission officials are requesting that the public health departments in the EC get on top of the outbreak and manage the media situation effectively. DG-SANCO is seeking advice and help from ECDC in managing the incident.

5th June 2007

The Austrian health ministry is today reporting an outbreak of diphtheria in the capital city Vienna. To date there are four cases and the strain of *Corynebacterium diphtheriae* has been confirmed by PCR to be a toxin producer. Two family members, a husband and wife, both formerly resident in Bosnia but who moved to Austria in 1991, are among the four identified. Another is a Slovakian citizen who, like the husband, worked as a taxi driver

in Vienna. The fourth is a neighbour of the family, an old lady (82) for whom the wife did cleaning and other odd jobs for. The old lady has now died. All were admitted yesterday to two different hospitals in the city, the Wiener Krankenanstaltenverbund and the Unfallkrankenhaus Lorenz Böhler. The three remaining patients are now being treated in the former in a dedicated ward.

As the Slovakian citizen is interviewed the following additional information is gathered. He works in Vienna but his family (wife and two children) live in Nitra, a town to the east of Bratislava. He visits them regularly but not every day. When he left two days ago his teenage son had a fever and a sore throat. His wife was not overly concerned and he had not felt the need to contact them since he returned to Vienna. When in Vienna he shares a very small flat with 2 others in the South eastern part of the city. They are all migrant workers, he's from Slovakia, another from Turkey and one from Bulgaria. The Bulgarian has recently returned to Plovdiv to see his family.

None of the other three confirmed cases have any significant travel history.

The Austrian Ministry of Health has informed counterparts in Slovakia that they have a case of diphtheria in a Slovak national who was recently in Slovakia. They have also posted information on the outbreak on the EWRS system to inform others across Europe.

The role of ECDC in coordinating the following activities could be explored:

- Assisting the response in each state
- Availability of antitoxin (coordinated by ECDC?)
- Liaison with WHO - Europe with respect to Turkey

Belgian Public health investigation

June 4, 2007

09:20 CET

The Federal Public Service of Public Health, Food Chain Safety and Environment in Belgium have only just been made aware of an outbreak of suspected Norovirus, based on clinical symptoms, in Brussels. The cases have arisen over the weekend and it was only on Monday morning at 9am CET, as a significant number of people fail to return to work, that the authorities became aware. They have informed the Health Inspector for the Brussels metropolitan region who in turn has dispatched a public health investigation team to the Berlaymont building to start the investigation and is in the process of assembling a crisis management team.

Initial analysis of the situation suggests:

- A large number of cases with symptom onset on the same day suggesting a single source for the outbreak
- The severity of the illness indicates an unusually virulent strain of Norovirus, although neither the strain nor the disease are confirmed at this stage.

11:00 CET

The public health investigation team have reported back to the public health service with a situation update.

- 267 staff affected including 3 commissioners.
- 1 fatality reported.
- Majority work at the Berlaymont building in Rue de la Loi
- Many have been identified as attending a 60th birthday party for the Irish Commissioner on June 1st.

- The external catering company for this event, which incidentally has never been used by EC before, is being contacted and a list of all attendees at the 60th birthday party being compiled.

14:00 CET

A public health team has been dispatched to the caterers (Corsa catering company) in Rue van Eyck in the Elsene region of Brussels to conduct interviews and collect samples of food for analysis. This includes a batch of oysters the majority of which were served at the event. A second team has been dispatched to collect samples from a small number of the affected staff for analysis. It is not anticipated that the results will be available until tomorrow, Tuesday June 5 at the earliest. Additional staff will be drafted in tomorrow for the contact tracing process should that be deemed necessary.

The single fatality will undergo an autopsy early tomorrow morning to establish cause of death. It is not known at this time if the fatality is related in any way to the Norovirus infection but we believe this to be unlikely.

The public health authorities believe they are effectively managing the crisis.

June 5 2007

09:00 CET

Update from FPS - Public health, Belgium

- The pathologist reports that the fatality associated with the norovirus outbreak was more likely due to chronic heart disease.
- No laboratory results have been received at this time. They are expected late morning.
- Report from Health inspector, Brussels metropolitan area; states that catering staff have now been interviewed. One was ill on the 31st May

and stayed at home but, although still unwell, returned to work on the 1st June and was involved in the preparation of the food for the event at the Berlaymont building. Two further employees had been ill the same days (31st May/1st June) including a cook, and two more were absent yesterday, 4th June. The health inspector had ordered the caterers closed with immediate effect on Monday evening and provided recommendations for disinfection. No functions were catered for over the weekend and the caterers withdrew from an event planned for Monday evening. It is expected the caterers will remain closed for up to a week. There have been no further reports of Norovirus outbreaks across the city.

11:30 CET

Preliminary results from the laboratory (based on RT-PCR) indicate that the causative agent for this outbreak was norovirus. DNA sequencing suggests however that the strain is not the GII Minerva strain. The number of cases reported this morning has dropped to 184. The public health authorities in Belgium remain confident that they are effectively managing the crisis and the acute phase is now starting to resolve as the reported incidence of the disease is declining despite increased awareness among the medical community in Brussels. A further update on the situation will be posted 09:00 CET 6th June 2007.

Austrian Public Health Investigation

08:00 CET

The Austrian health ministry is today reporting an outbreak of diphtheria in the capital city Vienna. To date four possible cases have been identified, one of whom has died. The bacterium *Corynebacterium diphtheriae* has been isolated from one of the patients (the fatal case) and confirmed by PCR to be a toxin producer. Results are expected shortly from the other cases.

09:15

The Austrian health ministry can now confirm one case and three strongly suspected cases (awaiting confirmation on microbiology but PCR positive) of diphtheria in the Austrian capital, Vienna.

The first confirmed case was an 82 year old female Liesel Stock. She was brought to the Emergency room at the Wiener Krankenanstaltenverbund on Saturday 2nd June and died 12 hours later of heart failure. Routine samples including throat swabs were taken for microbiology on entry to the ward. These were confirmed late on Monday 4th June as possible *Corynebacterium diphtheriae* (following 48 hours growth on blood agar). Overnight PCR results confirm the bacterium and the presence of the toxin gene.

Three further suspected cases were identified last night (Monday 4th June). Two family members, a husband and wife (Zoran and Aldina Malic), presented at a local clinic and were referred to the Wiener Krankenanstaltenverbund. They had the same address as Liesel Stock (174 Kentenbrückengasse) and have similar symptoms (tonsillitis, low-grade fever and Zoran had difficulty breathing). Both are former residents of Bosnia who moved to Austria in 1991. The wife did cleaning and other odd jobs for Liesel

Stock. They have no significant travel history. The third is Josef Klaus, a Slovakian citizen who, like Zoran Malic, works as a taxi driver in Vienna. He was admitted to the Unfallkrankenhaus Lorenz Böhler on Sunday 3rd June at 4pm. He has now been transferred to be with the others in a dedicated ward at the Wiener Krankenanstaltenverbund.

Josef Klaus lives in the Landstrasse district at 271 Weiskirchnerstrasse. He shares this small flat with two others, one from Bulgaria, Nikola Todorov, and one from Turkey, Asil Burakgazi. Josef Klaus' family live in Nitra, Slovakia. He last visited them 7 days ago on 29th May. At the time his only child, Vaclav (7yo), was unwell with a sore throat and flu-like symptoms. Josef was unconcerned and was due to visit his family again that day so had not been in touch since. The Austrian Health Ministry have contacted counterparts in Slovakia and provided them with all the details they have.

Austrian health authorities have not been able to contact the Turkish citizen, Asil Burakgazi, but have dispatched a public health physician to his address in the hope of interviewing him. The Bulgarian, Nikola Todorov unexpectedly returned to Plovdiv on Friday as his elderly mother has died. We have no further details for him except he lived in the village of Rogosh, part of Plovdiv.

The Austrian authorities are having difficulty contacting health officials in Bulgaria and have no formal contact with Turkey and would appreciate help in this from ECDC.

From this time to the end of the day

- Austrian authorities will continue to look for further cases of diphtheria
- Austrian Authorities will continue to look for Asil Burakgazi – to no avail
- Austria will develop a vaccination strategy based on those most at risk – primary contacts

Slovakia

At 09:00 CET 5th June, Slovakian authorities were contacted by colleagues in Austria reporting a confirmed outbreak of diphtheria in Vienna and a potential case in a Slovakian citizen, Josef Klaus, currently in a Viennese hospital. Austria were concerned that the family of this case may also be infected as he has visited them recently and were passing on this concern.

The Slovakian health department immediately contacted the regional public health centre in Nitra who dispatched a public health team to the neighbourhood where the family lived. They have also contacted health departments in the other regions to be on the look out for cases of diphtheria.

10:30 CET

Initial reports from the public health team in Nitra indicate that they do not believe that the 7yo son, Vaclav Klaus has diphtheria but an atypical respiratory disease. However to be sure they are taking the family of -Josef Klaus to the local hospital to undergo observation and do further tests. They have collected samples (throat swabs and blood) for routine microbial analysis. However they do not have the specialist capability for rapid confirmation of diphtheria (PCR) and request that ECDC help identify a laboratory in the EU where they can send samples for these rapid confirmatory tests. Meanwhile they will establish contact tracing teams to follow up any contacts of the wife and family.

14:00 CET

Slovakian Health ministry confirms they have identified 17 further cases of an atypical respiratory disease in Nitra, none of which are believed to be diphtheria. Samples have been taken for further analysis and infected individuals given antibiotics and advised to remain at home until symptoms have resolved. The Slovakian health ministry intend to take no additional measures until the results of tests have been confirmed.

Bulgaria

5 June 2007

(Timing dependent on contact from ECDC)

Following a report on EWRS at 08:00 from the Austrian health department, the Bulgarian authorities are reporting a cluster of undiagnosed respiratory disease in Plovdiv. This cluster only came to the attention of public health officials late yesterday afternoon (4th June 2007) following the deaths of two elderly people in a block of apartments in the east of the city and another six cases of the same disease in others living in the area. One of the deceased shares the same surname as the Bulgarian case living in Vienna. We are concerned that we may be dealing with a significant outbreak of diphtheria in Plovdiv and request urgent assistance from the ECDC.

30 minutes later

Bulgaria requests help with the following aspects

- 2 epidemiologists to aid in the control of the outbreak
- A laboratory diagnosis specialist to share expertise with our laboratory in Plovdiv
- A vaccine expert to advise on strategy and targeting

We expect the mission to last for up to 4 weeks

The contact point in the health ministry will be Irina Popov who will assist with all logistical arrangements for this mission.

WHO – Europe (for Turkey)

The Turkish health department thank WHO-Europe, ECDC and Austria for the early notification that a Turkish citizen has potentially been exposed to Diphtheria. They currently await further information on the movements of the contact and meanwhile are advising the health community throughout Turkey to be on the look out for potential cases of Diphtheria