

## SCENARIO

### ECDC Exercise 3 Scenario

#### Background

The UEFA 2008 football tournament finals are being hosted jointly by Austria and Switzerland. As a proactive measure the Austrian health department has been working closely with ECDC and established a close liaison and open lines of communication by placing two ECDC staff officers in the Austrian capital Vienna to work alongside Austrian health colleagues for the duration of the tournament.

The first game kicked off at 18:00 CET on Saturday 7 June in Basel between one of the host nations Switzerland and the Czech Republic. Over the three weeks of the tournament, 16 teams from across Europe will compete in 31 games in 8 cities, with the final due to be held in Vienna on Sunday 29 June. By then nearly 2 million people will have visited the host cities to attend the games or just to experience the carnival atmosphere that this tournament has become synonymous with.

In group B of the tournament are the other host country, Austria, Croatia, Germany and Poland. Their matches are being played in Vienna and Klagenfurt. These matches are expected to have a huge following, especially with the close proximity of Austria to Germany. To cope with the major influx of visitors and to maximise the number of beds available for fans, the local authorities in Vienna have rented a number of “Botels”, floating hotels, and situated them on the Danube. Fan camps, low cost tented accommodation, have also been set up to provide an additional 3000 beds in the suburbs.

The health authorities are on high alert, determined that the proactive strategy to managing public health during the tournament, will prevent any major outbreak of disease. All surveillance activities have been increased and hospitals advised that any suspected outbreaks of infectious disease be reported immediately to the authorities.

The tournament itself got off to a slow start. The unseasonably heavy and prolonged rainfall in the days leading up to the start of the tournament and the losses by both host nations in their opening games created something of a dour atmosphere. Newspapers were full of horror stories about poor standards of accommodation, especially in the tented villages in Vienna, which became uninhabitable for three days, with people being temporarily housed in overcrowded emergency shelters. Fears were raised briefly about unsanitary conditions but the prompt action of the Viennese public health officials meant that there were no significant outbreaks of disease. However by the middle of the first week things brightened considerably. The rain stopped and Switzerland narrowly beat Turkey. As the week continued, the weather continued to improve but the football, from the host nations, didn't. Both crashed out of the competition. In group B, Germany and Croatia qualified.

#### Tuesday 17 June (Day 1 of the exercise)

Today is the 17 June 2008, the approximate mid-point of the tournament. Already, 4 teams have been eliminated from the tournament, Austria, Poland, Switzerland and Turkey, and their fans are preparing to return home.

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At 1pm the Meningitis reference laboratory in Graz, Austria reports to the Ministry of Health that they have received samples from two separate hospitals for four individuals all with suspected *Neisseria meningitidis* infection. They are all in young adults, 3 from the same hospital in Vienna, another from a hospital in Klagenfurt. The four, all men aged 18-36, were taken ill over the past two or three days. They are all attending the football tournament, three, taken ill in Vienna, are from Germany and the fourth, taken ill in Klagenfurt, is from Poland. The laboratory is currently analysing the samples but the results will not be known until tomorrow.

Based on the information received, the Austrian Ministry of Health post a message on EWRS and inform WHO according under IHR.

Later that day further information on the four cases emerges. Two, a German and a Pole, are both in intensive care. They have rapidly developed a septicaemic picture in addition to the petechial rash and other symptoms more normally associated with bacterial meningitis infection. The outbreak is also unusual in that the age of two of the individuals (32 and 36) is somewhat higher than would normally be expected.

June 18 (Day 2 of the exercise)

Overnight another 7 cases emerged in Polish and German fans in Klagenfurt (2 Poles) and Vienna (4 Germans, 1 Pole) based on a clinical diagnosis.

A German footballer, Robert Hoof, 28, was also admitted to hospital in Vienna late last night. Hoof was withdrawn at a very late stage, from the team to play the final game in the group stage, feeling unwell and all the sports media were speculating during the game and after about the nature of his illness. 24 hours later his condition deteriorated rapidly and within 6 hours he died. The suspected cause, based on clinical diagnosis, was bacterial meningitis. However this is awaiting confirmation by the reference laboratory in Graz. The morning newspapers and other media have learned of the death and are reporting it as an unexplained death.

Following this death, apparently associated with the meningococcal outbreak, the Austrian Ministry of health have provided an update on EWRS.

The four cases from yesterday have now been confirmed to be infected by the same B strain of *Neisseria meningitidis*. The confirmation was based on a nested PCR on the *ctrA* gene, able to identify *N. meningitidis* and at the same time differentiate between serotypes. They appear to be responding well to antibiotic treatment (ciprofloxacin). All four have spent some time on the Camping Wien West tented village in the Hutteldorf suburb of Vienna which was temporarily evacuated last week due to standing water and mud. Portuguese fans are now arriving in Vienna for their quarter final game and many are intending to stay at the same tented village.

The press are now aware of the death of the footballer and are pressing the Austrian health authorities for answers. Some say the championship should be called off as the infection is spreading “out of control”.

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Further work by the Austrian reference laboratory overnight has confirmed the presence of an insertion sequence between the *sia* and *ctrA* genes. The implications of this are not yet clear but a similar phenomenon associated with a serogroup type C strain of *N meningitidis* emerging in Spain last year has been seen before. This strain was hypervirulent due to its ability to overproduce capsule. (Austria would value the advice of Spain and others across Europe who may have had experience of this similar strain – perhaps ECDC could coordinate?).

Later that day:

1. As the surveillance for other cases of the disease is increased, more suspected cases are quickly found.
2. Panic is starting to ensue within the travelling fans and more and more worried well inundate the health posts set up for the event. Hospital emergency departments are also inundated with fans requesting help.
3. Romania are reporting two suspected cases of meningitis in fans returning from Euro 2008. They are requesting assistance with typing as they do not yet have the sophisticated nested PCR up and running in their country. Can ECDC or WHO help?

For information the others groupings are:

Spain Russia Greece Sweden (play grp games in Austria)

Switzerland, Portugal, Czech Republic, Turkey (play grp games in Switzerland)

Italy, Romania , Netherlands, France (play grp games in Switzerland)