

Introduction

Since 1989, the Infectious Disease Epidemiology Section (IDEpi) of the Louisiana Office of Public Health (OPH) has published annual summaries of infectious disease data in the *Epidemiology Annual Report*. The 2000-2001 version was the last hard-copy (booklet) version published. Since then, summaries for individual diseases have been updated on the web.

1. Purpose of This Report

Passive Surveillance

IDEpi conducts surveillance to track infectious diseases within the state. Surveillance is essential to understanding the health status of a population and planning effective prevention programs. Publishing reports on surveillance activities and data provides the health care community, government and regulatory agencies and concerned individuals and groups with important statistical information on Louisiana's reportable diseases and conditions.

Expansion of the Scope of the Annual Report

Annual reports previous to the year 2000, focused on the results of the infectious diseases' passive surveillance programs. The format of the report however, was expanded to present a more comprehensive view of the infectious diseases of public health importance. In addition to discussing the results of passive surveillance, this report includes data on active surveillance, results of surveys, estimations based on national surveillance and summaries of articles.

For example, the report has always described the enteric diseases caused by Salmonella, Shigella, Vibrio, Campylobacter and *E. coli* 0157:H7 because they are routinely reported through the state's passive surveillance system. Currently also covered are descriptions of Rotavirus and Norovirus, which are not reported passively, but are among the most common enteric pathogens.

Because the epidemiologic characteristics of many infections are unique, the report avoids the use of a "cookie cutter" approach in presenting data on each disease. This flexibility in information presentation allows the particular characteristics of each infection to be addressed and gives the reader a more complete understanding of the impact of individual diseases on the public's health.

Inclusion of Historical Perspectives

As some diseases are increasing and others disappearing, it is important to present each disease from its historical perspective.

Prior to the year 2000, the annual reports focused on data collected during the report year and compared it with data collected during the previous two or three years. For rare diseases however, a picture spanning only few years is incomplete. For a true representation of age group, race, seasonal and geographical distribution, it may be useful to present data based on 10, 15, or even 20 years.

2. Disease Reporting in Louisiana

Reporting of notifiable diseases to the health department is the backbone of disease surveillance in Louisiana and nationally. The history of the reporting and tracking of diseases that could pose a risk to public health in the United States dates back more than a century. The importance of disease surveillance and reporting was summarized 50 years ago in the following statement that accompanied the weekly publication of morbidity statistics: “No health department, state or local, can effectively prevent or control disease without the knowledge of when, where and under what condition, cases are occurring.”

All health care providers and related professionals are required by law to report cases of selected diseases and conditions. In order for the data to be comparable among states and nationally, reported cases are evaluated in the IDEpi central office to determine if they meet uniform case definitions from the Council of State and Territorial Epidemiologists (CSTE) and Centers of Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Follow-up or intervention activities are conducted as warranted.

Individual case reports of certain diseases, such as Tuberculosis and Syphilis, receive follow-up by OPH disease investigators to ensure that patients receive appropriate medical treatment and that their contacts receive preventive therapy. Reports of some infectious diseases such as Measles, Salmonellosis and Vibrio infections, can lead to identification of disease outbreaks that can then be controlled. Accessing reliable information regarding disease outbreaks allows for a raised index of diagnostic suspicion. The health care provider’s initial disease reports are the key to this process. Reports can also be used to identify groups at high risk, prompting intervention efforts targeted at those groups.

The List of Reportable Diseases/Conditions in Louisiana can also be found on the IDEpi web page *Reportable Disease Surveillance* under *Sanitary Code*. The reportable disease list allows providers to focus on diseases that are actively tracked epidemiologically and diseases for which we have active prevention programs. This list is based on the national list determined by CSTE with adaptations to Louisiana.

Infectious Diseases can be reported through a Web-Accessed Tool

If you wish to use a web-based, reportable, disease database system, please call the IDEpi IDRIS coordinator. The coordinator will assign you an ID and password, which will allow you to report through the web. You will have access to the data you have reported, but no one else outside the IDEpi will have access to your confidential data. The system meets the high standards of confidentiality set up by state and federal law (HIPAA).

For those who do not have web access, reportable diseases/conditions may be reported by phone, faxing or mailing a form or on an EPI-2430 card. All facsimile transmissions are considered as part of the confidential disease case report and as such, are not subject to disclosure.