



MEASLES MORTALITY REDUCTION AND REGIONAL GLOBAL MEASLES ELIMINATION

WHAT IS THE PUBLIC HEALTH ISSUE?

Measles caused an estimated 345,000 deaths worldwide in 2005 and is the leading cause of childhood deaths from a disease for which there is a widely available vaccine. From 1989 to 1991, a measles outbreak affected more than 55,000 Americans, resulting in 123 deaths. The United States remains at risk of importation of measles from countries that have not yet eliminated the disease. A total of 49 confirmed measles cases were provisionally reported in the United States in 2006, all related to imported measles virus. Maintaining high measles vaccination coverage and high quality surveillance for measles and other vaccine preventable diseases in the Americas is essential to preventing reintroduction of endemic measles virus in the region.

WHAT HAS CDC ACCOMPLISHED?

As of November 2002, measles is no longer an endemic disease in the Americas demonstrating the effectiveness of current control strategies in a large geographic area. There were only 187 confirmed measles cases reported in the Western Hemisphere in 2006. These cases occurred mainly in Venezuela, Mexico and the United States, with all cases related to importations from endemic countries outside of the Western Hemisphere.

With funds from CDC's immunization appropriations, CDC contributed about \$42 million in grants and other scientific and technical assistance to control measles globally during 2006. The Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) received a grant to maintain the elimination of measles from the Western Hemisphere and to support rubella elimination in the Americas by 2010. CDC also supports the Measles Partnership—a joint effort by the American Red Cross/The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, the World Health Organization (WHO), the United Nations Children's Fund, the United Nations Foundation, and CDC—to reduce measles-related mortality originally in Africa and South East Asia and beginning in 2007 in all regions. Through the end of 2005, the partnership has vaccinated over 217 million children and reduced the number of measles-related deaths by 75% in Africa.

Example of Program in Action

CDC provides epidemiologic and laboratory assistance for disease tracking, vaccines for outbreak control and other supplementary immunization activities, and assignments of CDC scientific staff to priority countries. In 2006, CDC provided scientific, technical, and programmatic support for measles outbreak investigations in Sudan, Georgia, Ukraine, Fiji and Tanzania and contributed both funding and technical assistance to measles immunization campaigns in 23 African countries, Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Indonesia, and Yemen. These efforts resulted in recommendations for improved surveillance and control activities and contributed substantially to declines in measles mortality.

WHAT ARE THE NEXT STEPS

In 2007, CDC and its partners will continue to apply current measles control strategies to maintain elimination of measles in the western hemisphere. CDC will promote PAHO strategies in Africa and other regions to reduce mortality from measles and to stop endemic measles transmission in who regions with a measles elimination goal.

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