

Committee on the Inquiry into the E.coli outbreak in Wales

E.Coli (2)-02-05 (P2)

Meeting date: 17 November 2005

Meeting time: 9.00am

Meeting venue: Committee Room 1, National Assembly for Wales

PAPER FROM THE CHAIR OF CMO REVIEW OF PUBLIC HEALTH MEASURES

Purpose

1. This paper provides information on matters relevant to the Committee's deliberations covering possible terms of reference of the review and action to date of the CMO Review Group.

Possible Terms of Reference

1. Over 150 people, the vast majority children, have had clinical disease through infection during this outbreak. One child has died as a result of haemolytic uraemic syndrome (HUS) and a further 8 children admitted to hospital with HUS. Similarly, 2 adults also acquired HUS. Cases are still occurring in the community, probably as a result of seeding from the primary outbreak.
2. The Minister for Health and Social Service asked the CMO to conduct an urgent review of public health measures in place in Wales and to ensure there are no immediate further measures needed to protect public health from similar incidents. This review remains on target to report by Christmas.
3. I have read the papers and minutes of the committee's first meeting and would concur with the broad agreement of the various bodies and individuals consulted over the areas to be covered. However, there will be an inevitable overlap in the work being undertaken by the CMO's review group. As a result, much information will be available and I would therefore recommend to the committee that the terms of reference for the enquiry should include:
4. "To conduct a Public Inquiry into the factors that led to the E coli O157 outbreak in the South Wales valleys in September/October 2005 through:
 0. receipt of the report of the CMO's urgent review of public health following the E. coli incident in South Wales and review any urgent action taken.

1. receipt of the final outbreak report from the Outbreak Control Team.
2. review of the extant legislation and guidance in the light of the Pennington Report 1997 and the Scottish Task Force.
3. formulation of questions and invitation of witnesses as appropriate to validate information received
4. review of evidence received and thereby make recommendations for further action to prevent similar large outbreaks of infection."

CMO Public Health Review

1. The terms of reference of the urgent CMO review are:

"To review the arrangements in place for the protection of public health and food safety immediately before and during the outbreak of E.coli infection in South Wales commencing September 2005 and to advise the Welsh Assembly Government immediately, as the review progresses, on any changes it recommends.

The areas to be considered will include:

- Measures and statutory requirements in place to protect food in the supply chain;
- Monitoring, inspection and enforcement regimes;
- Plans, guidance and mechanisms for outbreak control, including mechanisms to trigger action;
- The manner in which the responsible organisations discharged their statutory obligations;
- Collaborative working, including communication by and between responsible organisations;
- Information provided in respect of public health."

1. To date, the project team have drawn together legislation, reports and guideline considered pertinent to an outbreak of E. coli O157.
2. In addition, they have requested and begun to receive time-lines from the various parties involved in the outbreak.
3. The outbreak control team is completing an interim report of the outbreak, essentially covering the period occupied by the primary schools based outbreak. We recognise that their final report will not be available for some time. Recent secondary cases will necessitate retaining the outbreak control team for some more time.
4. The documentation, time-lines and draft report will be scrutinised by the review group and a series of questions for relevant parties developed.
5. Following receipt of answers to questions, the review group will aim to identify any new urgent public health measures that need to be established and make recommendations to the CMO and Minister for Health and Social Services.

Dr Mike Simmons

