

ABSTRACT

Pandemic influenza in the Marche region: organisation of an epidemiological network in response to health emergencies of infectious origin

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As part of activities implemented in response to the H1N1/2009 pandemic influenza, Decree 145/09 of the Director of the Marche Regional Health Authority established a functional epidemiological network. The measure was approved on the recommendation of the Regional Pandemic Committee (CPR).

Establishment of the network had become necessary to monitor the flow of information envisaged under the Regional Pandemic Influenza Response Action Plan (Regional Decree 1515/09). The indicators used for monitoring the flow of information concerned specific information flows that were already active or waiting to be activated.

These indicators were related to virological surveillance (virus isolation with typing), the impact of a pandemic on hospitals (access to First Aid services, syndromic surveillance at the First Aid unit of United Hospitals of Ancona, and hospital admissions), the impact on General Practitioners and Pediatricians systems (Influnet surveillance of sentinel physicians and specific flow on pandemic impact on their activities), public health measures (vaccination, training of health workers), communication (data from the call centre and website), and the impact on the population (notifications, work absenteeism, truancy). To oversee regional flows and manage those of ministries, an epidemiological network for responding to emergencies of infectious origin was set up, consisting of Local Epidemiological Units (Marche Epidemiological Network - REM), sentinel doctors (national and regional flows), the Hospital First Aid unit – United University Hospitals of Ancona (regional member of syndromic surveillance), the Virological Service of United

Hospitals of Ancona (regional focal point for syndromic surveillance), the Regional Epidemiological Observatory (OER) of the Regional Health Agency (ARS), and the Public Health Service Health of the Marche Regional Health Authority. This latter structure coordinates the management of flows in the routine phase, while in the pandemic phase coordination is the responsibility of the coordinator of REM and the OER.

In the pandemic phase, a temporary working group has been established to provide the necessary support in the collection and analysis of data. The group comprises: the coordinator of REM, a doctor with epidemiological expertise and a veterinary doctor in part-time charge at the Marche Region, an assistant regional health coordinator, and two doctors specializing in hygiene. The technical group has worked closely with the coordinator of the CPR, operating as an interface between the region and local structures. A weekly epidemiological bulletin has been issued, providing the CPR with a useful instrument for analysing the situation and taking specific decisions. The bulletin, under the supervision of the CPR, is sent to Local Pandemic Committees.

The experience has been positive in the area of pandemic emergency, given the opportunity to have rapid flows of information and frequent (often daily) data collection (such as hospital admissions with the cooperation of the Hospital Administrations), which have been useful for following the phenomenon and managing external communication. The network has also remained active in the non-emergency phase for reporting unexpected events and monitoring the epidemiological development of infectious diseases such as seasonal influenza.



The logo and the slogan for the regional campaign: "Through prevention we fight on an equal footing".