

Abstract case study Corona

Background

During an infectious disease outbreak, swift action is necessary to minimize the impact of the outbreak. Decisions need to be taken about the risk assessment, risk management and risk communication. This process is known as outbreak management (OM). Due to the context of an outbreak, OM can be very complex e.g. time pressure or public unrest. To improve OM, public participation (PP) in OM could potentially be very beneficial. By involving the public's perspective, OM can become more balanced and fitting to the public's needs. To identify opportunities for PP in the process of OM, the COVID-19 pandemic is studied. At the end of December 2019, the Chinese authorities warned the WHO about a cluster of pneumonia cases in Wuhan with an unknown cause. This announcement was the first of many on SARS-CoV-2, as the cluster of cases developed into a pandemic. Citizens were confronted with the outbreak in various ways, as they had to apply a variation of lockdown measures, but also constantly fearing infection or infected loved ones with insecurity on the course of the outbreak. This sparked a lot of public debate and unrest. The aim of this study is to explore the attitude of the general public towards public participation during the management of COVID-19 in the Netherlands. Subsequently, the opinion of the general public will be discussed on the level and method of PP, and when PP could be of value.

Method

Several online focus groups discussions were held with the general public in June, in the midst of the COVID-19 outbreak in the Netherlands. During the focus groups, the participants created a timeline of the outbreak that portrayed their personal experiences. By using the timeline, attitudes about and opportunities for PP during the outbreak were discussed.

Results

The results from the focus group discussions will be presented.

Conclusion

This study was one of the first to explore PP within the process of OM in the Netherlands from the perspective of the public, using the COVID-19 pandemic as a real-time outbreak.

Abstract case study Listeria – original submitted abstract

Background

During an infectious disease outbreak, swift action is necessary to minimize the impact of the outbreak. Decisions need to be taken about the risk assessment, risk management and risk communication. This process is known as outbreak management (OM). Due to the context of an outbreak, OM can be very complex e.g. time pressure or public unrest. To improve OM, public participation (PP) in OM could potentially be very beneficial. By involving the public's perspective, OM can become more balanced and fitting to the public's needs.

To identify opportunities for PP in the process of OM, the Listeria-outbreak is studied. Listeria monocytogenes is a bacteria that regularly causes foodborne disease outbreaks worldwide. In an Listeria-outbreak in the Netherlands, meat products from various supermarkets were possibly infected. Citizens had to discard these products and were confronted with the insecurity of possible infection. This sparked a lot of media attention and public unrest. The aim of this study is to explore the attitudes of all stakeholders in an outbreak on PP and identify opportunities for PP.

Method

First, interviews with professionals involved in the Listeria-outbreak were executed. Second, focus groups were held with identified stakeholders. Per stakeholder group, a timeline of the Listeria-outbreak was created that portrayed their personal experiences. By using the Listeria-outbreak timeline, attitudes about and opportunities for PP were discussed.

Results

The interviews identified the following relevant stakeholders during the Listeria-outbreak: the general public, elderly, pregnant women, obstetricians, municipal health services, the Netherlands food and consumer product safety authority and the center for infectious disease control. The results from the focus group will be presented.

Conclusion

This study was one of the first to explore PP within the process of OM in the Netherlands from the perspective of all relevant stakeholders in the outbreak.