Abstract

The increased international concern regarding the transfer of bacterial foodborne pathogens, including resistant variants, between animals and humans has helped spur the development of numerous surveillance systems and networks around the world. In the United States, three programs are in place that combine active and passive surveillance with epidemiologic studies to help public health officials better understand the dynamics of foodborne diseases. The purpose of this paper is to evaluate one of such systems, the National Antimicrobial Resistance Monitoring System (NARMS). NARMS program was developed to monitor changes in susceptibility of select bacteria to antimicrobial agents of human and veterinary importance [1]. NARMS is a multi-faceted monitoring system that takes advantage of the expertise and resources of a number of federal agencies and state public health laboratories designed to detect changes in susceptibilities among foodborne pathogens recovered from food animals, retail meats and humans. Using DCD's updated guidelines for evaluating public health surveillance systems, this paper will take a closer look at NARMS to ensure that problems of public health importance are being monitored efficiently and effectively. To have a better understanding of the system I will evaluate attributes such as completeness, usefulness, flexibility, timeliness, simplicity, acceptability and representativeness in order to express any concerns. In addition I will draw a parallel between how these attributes can be improved through changes in the objectives related to NARMS established strategic goals geared towards developing a sampling strategy that is more representative; to strengthen cross agency collaboration; and to develop an integrated database that will allow data sharing and enhance reporting functions.

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