

Challenges and Opportunities in Making Surveillance Data Available to the Public: Experiences from Taiwan Centers for Disease Control

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Abstract

As mentioned by Pisani and AbouZahr, “by refusing to share data, researchers are slowing progress towards reducing illness and death.” Although there are many barriers to make surveillance data available to the public, such as incentives, confidentiality, funding, and technical issues, sharing data has the potential for conducting more and better studies to influence policy and practice.

The Taiwan Centers for Disease Control (Taiwan CDC) has been publishing monthly and annually the reports on the surveillance of infectious diseases since decades ago. Until the end of 2007, the Taiwan CDC has made the aggregated surveillance data available to the public by providing publicly accessible figures of epidemic curves and computable datasets through an open-access website that is updated daily. The Taiwan CDC is also recovering the historical paper-based surveillance data that was generated prior to the reorganization of the institute.

This presentation will describe the challenges and obstacles encountered by the Taiwan CDC in making computable surveillance data accessible to the public. The technical issues identified while restoring historical data, e.g. the different time used to describe the data, the change in the administrative boundaries, and different case definitions, will also be discussed.