Dengue Outbreak, Palau, December 2018 – May 2019
Report Date: May 28, 2019

Outbreak Overview

On Friday, December 7, 2018, the Palau Ministry of Health alerted the public of an outbreak of dengue fever following the first ever laboratory confirmation of two cases with dengue serotype 3. This poses a significant concern for public health as the whole population is potentially vulnerable to infection.

In response to the outbreak, the Ministry of Health activated its emergency response team on December 7, 2018. The team has been tasked with raising community awareness of the outbreak and dengue prevention measures, conducting disease surveillance and reporting, strengthening mosquito control measures, and ensuring adequate resources are available to combat the outbreak. Between May 20 – 26, 2019, there were 9 new cases reported. This brings the total from December 1, 2018 to May 26, 2019 to 196 cases.

There have been no reported deaths attributed to dengue infection during this outbreak.

Demographics

Age range = 0 – 88 years
Mean age = 31 years
Median age = 26 years
Male:Female ratio = 119:1
The majority of cases during this outbreak have been Palauan.

Ethnicity Count %
Palauan 163 85%
Bangladeshi 12 6%
Filipino 7 4%
Chinese 6 3%
Other 8 4%
TOTAL 196

Symptom Profile of Cases

# of Cases with Each Symptom (Cases with available data = 188)

- Fever
- Chills
- Headache
- Body pain
- Joint pain
- Loss of appetite
- Altered taste sensation
- Nausea
- Vomiting
- Cough
- Eye pain
- Abdominal pain
- Rash

Symptom (Cases with available data = 188)

Epi Curve

Dengue Cases by Week of Diagnosis

Epi Week

Lab Testing

- The Belau National Hospital (BNH) Laboratory and 3 private clinics on-island continue to screen symptomatic patients for dengue with a rapid diagnostic test kit.
- The BNH Lab continues to send serum specimens to Hawai’i State Laboratory (HSL) for confirmation and serotyping.
- There have been 117 serotyped cases of DENV-3. The last recorded cases of DENV-2 in Palau were from November of 2018.

Response Measures

- The dengue outbreak response team is continuing efforts to increase community awareness on the dengue outbreak and prevention measures through:
  - Weekly radio talk shows at the national radio station
  - Dissemination of print material about dengue prevention to the community
  - Development of dengue prevention videos for public consumption that target young adults
  - The Ministry of Health partnered with the Ministry of Education and Roll’Em Productions to host a dengue prevention contest for students to promote dengue awareness and the Year of Innovative Learning and Excellence.

  - A total of 30 students from elementary and high schools in Palau participated the contest.
    - Winning videos were submitted by students from Angaur Elementary School (1st place), Ibobang Elementary School (2nd place), Maris Stella Elementary School (3rd place) and Palau High School (1st place).
    - Contest winners will tour the Roll’Em Productions studio and learn more about video production.
    - The Palau Ministry of Health would like to recognize the generous support of donors towards prizes for this contest from Dr. Thaine Hancock ($1000) and the Belau Medical Society ($1000).

The Communicable Disease Unit and the DEH Vector Control Program continue to investigate reported cases of dengue fever and implement vector control measures.

The Palau Ministry of Health’s community dengue prevention 3S message:

- Search and eliminate mosquito breeding sites.
- Self-protect by wearing insect repellent and ensuring a mosquito-free environment.
- Seek early consultation if you show severe signs or symptoms of dengue.

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