

## Inception of PICNet

The Pacific Regional Infection Control Network (PICNet) was officially launched in February 2006 at a technical consultation meeting and training workshop on infection control and prevention held in Lautoka, Fiji Islands. The meeting was organised by SPC within the framework of PPHSN, with financial assistance from the Asian Development Bank (ADB).

PICNet is designed to facilitate infection control response to infectious disease threats in the region, through better communication, accessibility of expertise and technical advice.

### **History**

The idea of PICNet arose during the 1<sup>st</sup> Regional EpiNet Workshop, held in 2003 after the SARS threat. In September 2005, an Infection Control Specialist (ICS), Ms Peta-Anne Zimmermann, funded by ADB, was attached to PPHSN to further the development of PPHSN and to improve infection control capacity in a sustainable way through a variety of activities, including the development of PICNet (see *Inform'ACTION* 22: 10–13).

### **Technical consultation meeting**

The meeting in Lautoka was the first gathering of PICNet members and established the terms of reference for the network (see below).

Participants came from Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji Islands, Kiribati, Nauru, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands and Tonga. The facilitators of the meeting included Ms Peta-Anne Zimmerman; Ms Margaret Leong, Risk Management Unit, Lautoka Hospital, Fiji Islands; Mr Philip Melling, Clinical Nurse Consultant, NSW Infection Control Resource Centre, Sydney, Australia; Dr Tom Kiedrzyński, Epidemiologist, SPC; Dr Narendra Singh, Communicable Disease Surveillance Specialist, SPC; and Dr Kubo Toru, Medical Officer, WHO Suva Office.

The first two days of the event were dedicated to technical consultation with participants, primarily to report on the current infection control situation within the region and to set priorities and future plans. In addition, the inaugural members were given two documents to review and give feedback on: draft regional infection control guidelines, and management of occupational exposure guidelines.

### **Training workshop**

The training workshop took up the last three days of the event. Its focus was to assist beginning infection control professionals (ICPs) to set up and implement infection control programmes in their respective nations or facilities. The three major themes of the training were: the basic principles of infection control; management of occupational exposures, including practical case study exercises; and sharing of experiences and lessons learnt.

### **Exercise Lucy Goose**

Exercise Lucy Goose is a tabletop exercise that aims to highlight and define the role of ICPs in influenza pandemic preparedness and response planning and implementation. All participants were engaged in the exercise, with three groups established to work through the eight messages issued over a period of approximately four hours. Primarily facilitated by Ms Zimmerman and Mr Melling, Lucy Goose was based on Exercise Warning Shot, which was conducted by the NSW Government in 2003.



### **Logo**

Based on the PPHSN logo, the PICNet logo has been developed by an SPC graphic artist following recommendations by the meeting

participants. It will be sent to all PPHSN core members for their comments and endorsement.

### **PICNet: Terms of reference**

#### **Objectives**

Within the framework of PPHSN:

- To set minimum standards for infection control in PICTs, with adapted evidence-based/best practices
- To develop infection control capacity in PICTs
- To raise awareness of infection control issues
- To develop and maintain infection control links with health (and other) entities (e.g. governmental and non-governmental agencies, donors)
- To develop a strategic plan for PICNet
- Future objective: To develop and maintain standardised healthcare-associated infection (HAI) surveillance and response mechanisms

#### **Membership**

##### **Core**

- All health professionals with an interest in infection control, with one national focal point for each SPC member state

##### **Allied**

- Health professionals from Australia and New Zealand with an interest in infection control
- International organisations: WHO, SPC
- Training institutions, including schools of nursing, medicine, oral health
- Donors

#### **Steering committee**

- WHO (1)
- SPC (1)
- Fiji School of Medicine (1) (yet to be confirmed)
- Six core-member representatives, who volunteered and were nominated at the first technical consultation meeting, from Fiji, Kiribati, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa and Solomon Islands

This composition will be subsequently reviewed and adapted to have sub-regional representation, like the PPHSN Coordinating Body. A renewal process will also be put in place.

##### **Roles**

- Facilitate and monitor the achievement of objectives
- Maintain records of PICNet meetings/workshops, including recommendations and plans of action, and disseminate them to relevant bodies for appropriate action
- Internal communication by e-mail, with a meeting or teleconference twice a year

#### **Focal point**

The focal point of PICNet is the PPHSN Coordinating Body focal point.

##### **Roles**

- Develop and maintain network communication with core and allied members and external linkages
- Provide technical assistance in collaboration with other agencies/members

**Conclusion**

The workshop provided an essential and unprecedented forum for ICPs in the Pacific region. New and exciting initiatives and plans were established to further the work and support of infection control and prevention throughout the region. The overall evaluation of the meeting indicates that it was a worthwhile exercise and important in raising the profile of infection control, not only at a regional level but also at a national and facility level.

The meeting report, including the complete set of documents (Action Plan, Exercise Lucy Goose, etc.), will be available soon on the PICNet web page of the PPHSN website:  
<http://www.spc.int/phs/PPHSN/Activities/PICNet.htm>