Hepatitis A outbreak in the EU/EEA: an update

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Source: ECDC

Between June 2016 and November 2017, 22 EU/EEA countries including Austria, Belgium, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden and UK (England & Wales), reported 3’813 outbreak-confirmed cases of hepatitis A, that peaked in March 2017 (507 cases). For 3’791 cases, information on gender was available: Compared to the last outbreak update in September 2017, when the male-to-female (M/F) ratio was 9.3, data for December indicate the ratio has dropped to 6.8, as per a recent ECDC report on an epidemiological update on hepatitis A outbreak in the EU/EEA mostly affecting men who have sex with men (MSM).

Comment
The recent hepatitis A outbreak accounted for thousands of cases in Europe and was mainly due to sexual transmission. However, recently something is changing. Indeed, the M/F ratio has significantly decreased in the recent months but remains higher than in previous years.

A considerable increase in the total number of hepatitis A cases in women has also been observed, with outbreak strains circulating in this group too. This indicates that the outbreak has spilled over to the non-MSM population.

Although decreasing in its intensity, the outbreak is still ongoing and more cases associated with this event are to be expected in EU/EEA countries in the coming months.

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