

Meeting with HELICS Slovakian Representative during ESCMID Conference

Those present: HELICS – Jacques Fabry, Ian Russell.
National Public Health Institute, Slovakia – Maria Stefkovicova.

Date : Saturday, 1st May, 2004.

An overview of the current progress of the HELICS project was discussed;

- the preliminary analysis carried out at the Brussels meeting in December following the retrospective data collection to the end of 2003 will be finalised soon and the Statistical Report will be issued.
- Beyond the end of the current funding period (after December 2004), there will be three possible strands of activities. Firstly, it is hoped that the HELICS surveillance activity will continue, albeit perhaps in a reduced scale, with a view in due course to handing over management of the HELICS database depending on the requirements of the new ECDC. In addition, two new proposals for funding have been made to the EU. The first is ‘NosoVal’, submitted as a research project under the Sixth Framework Programme, which will concern the validity of data collected under the national NI surveillance programmes. The second is ‘IPSE’ (Improving Patient Safety in Europe), submitted under the DG SANCO Call for Proposals 2004, which is a broader programme than HELICS which will be oriented towards the prevention and control of infection. The possibility for Slovakia to participate in these future activities will exist should the requested funding become available.

The current progress of NI surveillance activities in Slovakia was discussed;

The preliminary (Belgian) version of the HELICS hospital software was received in Slovakia earlier in the year. Some interest has since been shown in Slovakian ICU’s for this software. Of the trial use made of the software to date, data entry has been carried out satisfactorily, but some difficulties were encountered with the export routine. The final version of the hospital software will be available soon and it was agreed that, as the proper support for the software will be available then, a proper implementation of the software will be arranged in Slovakia at that time.

A proposal for a hospital network in Slovakia is under consideration. The first step will be to choose 3 or 4 hospitals to participate in the HELICS ICU (of which 1 or 2 will be in Bratislava). Cooperation has already been established with one hospital in Bratislava via contact with an Intensive Care Doctor. With the assistance of this Doctor, the identification of another hospital is planned soon.

It was suggested that starting with a paper based pilot data collection could be a good first step to establish systems, rather than waiting at this stage for the final hospital software.

The National Health system in Slovakia is currently being reorganised. There are general problems in the Health System and, as a result, the health ministry does not consider NI to be the main priority at this stage. It was suggested that NI surveillance could be one of the core elements in the reform of a National Health system by helping to advocate the promotion of patient safety.

In Slovenia, 90 hospitals with approximately 30,000 beds serve a population of some 5 million people. The provision of Infection Control support to hospitals in the country is variable. The nature of this provision stems from the arrangements that existed during the previous political regime in Slovakia. Support was given by the Public Health Institutes to the hospitals. Therefore, under this system, IC support was not part of the management team of the hospital. Therefore, although some IC support exists, it is not formally part of the hospital management and this situation persists today.

Reporting of hospital infections was mandatory and it is now thought that this resulted in wide under reporting. The reported NI rate was 0.7%, whereas the actual rate was in the range 5-10%.

Interest was expressed in the possibility of prevalence studies as a means of initiating interest both at local, national and political levels in NI surveillance.

The importance of informing the national representatives on the network committee about the nature and progress of surveillance work within the country was emphasised, so that this information could be disseminated at the network meetings.