

Epidemic intelligence (EI) in France: social networking emphasising the process

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ABSTRACT

Background: With 4% of its population living in overseas territories and almost 6% of its mainland population being foreign nationals France is also a tropical country. Considering this specific setting, InVS implemented in 2002 its own EI activities based on social networking including internet-based and human experts networking.

Methods: InVS EI is an event-based monitoring composed of 5 steps: detection, selection, validation, analysis and communication. Social networking takes an essential place at each stage of this process.

Results: Social network tools can be classified according to the objectives of each EI process' step. Hence, internet-based network (including event-based systems, blog, social media network and "to some extent" social network aggregator) are playing key role in detecting signals whereas human expert networking remain fundamental to go further in the EI process.

A description of both "e-tools" and human expert systems will be provided to highlight their application and specificity, focusing on their complementarity aspect during the EI process.

Conclusion: The escalating amount of available information and increasing expectations of stakeholders are the forthcoming EI challenges. Social network and more widely internet-based tools are a leading apparatus. They should be sustainable, adapted and enhanced according to EI and public health needs.