

IEMAG

Minutes of meeting – Wednesday 8 December 2021

Attendees: Philip Nolan (Chair), Brendan Murphy, Cathal Walsh, Catherine Timoney, Conor McAloon, Conor Teljeur, Darren Dahly, Eilis O'Reilly, Elizabeth Hunter, Eoghan McCarthy, Francis Butler, James P Gleeson, Jamie Madden, Jim Duggan, Justin Gleeson, Maire Connolly, Malachy Corcoran, Mark Roantree, Patrick Wall, Seán Lyons, Simon More

Apologies: Ajay Oza, Alan Cahill, Ann Barber, Breda Smyth, Chris Brunsdon, Conor Keegan, David McEvoy, Guy McGrath, John Kelleher, Máirín Ryan

DOH: Pauline White, Ronan O'Kelly

Secretariat: Denis Ryan, Fiona Tynan

Chair's Update

- The Chair welcomed and introduced Dr Catherine Timoney and Dr Eilis O'Reilly as new members of the IEMAG.
- The Chair thanked the group for the volume and quality of work done in recent days and weeks regarding the inclusion of the Omicron variant in the models. The group discussed the importance of conveying uncertainty in an understandable manner when disseminating model outputs.

HPSC Update/ Epidemiology Progress Update

- Work is ongoing in the HPSC on the COVID-19 dashboards, wastewater surveillance, data networking and understanding chains of infection, and on addressing issues of data access.

Modelling Update

- The homogenous model been updated to include a 40% transmission advantage for the Omicron variant. Four scenarios with varying levels of effective contact have been developed.
- With regards to the age-cohorted model, the clinical fraction has been updated in line with evidence from the Davies Paper and this is producing a better model fit.
- An exploratory variant transmission effect model has been developed. Discussions on the best method to model a new variant and its path to dominance are ongoing.
- Scenarios exploring contact tracing and increased movement during the festive period have been developed using the agent-based model.
- The group discussed early evidence relating to the Omicron variant.
- The group discussed the working definition for surveillance of reinfections and agreed the 9-month cut-off point may no longer be accurate in the context of the Omicron variant and potential escape from prior infection induced immunity.

Data Engineering Group Update

- The group are working on building data assets using case studies in collaboration with the Contact Management Programme. It is anticipated there will be initial problems with data integration and a timeframe for completion is not yet known.

AOB

- The group discussed concerns and frustrations regarding some public commentary on the accuracy and utility of the group's work. Members emphasized that it is a privilege to be able to contribute to the national effort, but it is a concern if the work is misunderstood,

misrepresented or dismissed. The Chair agreed to formally express the groups concerns to the CMO.

- The group discussed the importance of coordinating its communications and agreed that press queries should be directed to the Department of Health who will then seek technical input from Members.

Epidemiology Modelling

Actions:

1	Consider Omicron variant escape from prior infection induced immunity as well as vaccine induced immunity.
2	Consider best way to model the path to dominance of a new variant and incorporate this in models.

Healthcare Demand Modelling

Actions:

1	Continue to monitor the relationship between infection and outcome, with particular regard to the Omicron variant.
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Agent-Based Modelling

Actions:

1	Share slides to be presented to the NPHET.
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Transition to HPSC

Actions:

1	Continue to advocate for budget approval for modelling unit.
2	Continue work on enabling Geospatial Group access to small area data.

Miscellaneous Actions:

- The Chair to discuss updating the definition for surveillance of reinfection with the CMO.
- The Chair to formally express the groups concerns regarding the comments made on modelling work to the CMO.

Next Meeting: 12 January 2022, 11am