

IEMAG

Minutes of meeting – Wednesday 3 February 2022

Attendees: Philip Nolan (Chair), Ajay Oza, Alan Cahill, Breda Smyth, Brendan Murphy, Cathal Walsh, Chris Brunson, Conor Keegan, Conor McAloon, Conor Teljeur, Darren Dahly, Eilis O'Reilly, Elizabeth Hunter, Francis Butler, Guy McGrath, Kate Timoney, James P Gleeson, Jamie Madden, Jim Duggan, Maire Connolly, Máirín Ryan, Mark Roantree, Patrick Wall, Seán Lyons

Apologies: Ann Barber, Eoghan McCarthy, John Kelleher, Justin Gleeson, Malachy Corcoran, Simon More

DOH: Tony Holohan (CMO), Elizabeth McCrohan, Ronan O'Kelly, Pauline White

Secretariat: Fiona Tynan, Ivan Murphy, Ruth Brandon

Chair's Update

- The Chair gave a presentation on the current COVID-19 epidemiological data to the group.
- The group discussed issues with case ascertainment and data integrity due to recent changes to testing protocols.

Modelling Update:

- The group discussed current modelling challenges. There remains a number of uncertainties regarding the epidemiological parameters of the Omicron variant, including the length of the incubation period and serial interval, levels of reinfection, and levels of vaccine breakthrough. More data is required to confidently update the model assumptions.
- Given the current modelling challenges and in the context of low harm despite high levels of infection, the group agreed to pause infection and healthcare demand modelling. The group emphasized that the pandemic is not over and discussed the importance of rapidly mobilising modelling work should the need arise. The group discussed the importance of sustaining the current modelling infrastructure, including ensuring data permissions and access to data, to enable the IEMAG to rapidly respond if required.

HPSC Update/ Epidemiology Progress Update

- The levels of undetected infection in the population and the infection – hospitalisation ratio remain unknown. There is appetite to complete an infection survey however the sampling strategy presents a challenge. Seroprevalence work within the HPSC is progressing well.
- Work on estimating Omicron epidemiological parameters is ongoing. Members are in contact with colleagues in Denmark to share methods.
- The data sharing agreement to allow the Geospatial group access to small area data is progressing.
- Secondments within the HPSC have been extended for one year to allow for work to continue.
- The group continues to advocate for the establishment of the modelling and statistics unit within the HPSC.

Data Engineering Group Update

- The Data Engineering group is progressing the case study on integrating data from CIDR, CCT and CoVax. The group is currently working on creating data assets.

AOB

- Dr Tony Holohan, Chief Medical Officer (CMO), joined the meeting for a brief period and thanked all members of the IEMAG for their work and commitment to date, acknowledging the significant contribution the modelling has made to the pandemic response. The CMO also noted the importance of the timely establishment of a dedicated modelling unit to build modelling capacity for the future.
- Members discussed the importance of collating lessons learned in terms of data collection to ensure these learnings are not lost.

Epidemiology Modelling**Actions:**

1	Update model assumptions as data becomes available.
2	Discuss prospective data collection for modelling work with the Contact Management Programme (CMA to draft brief proposal).
3	Present wastewater surveillance work to the NPHET (DD to draft).
4	Routine epidemiology modelling to be paused.

Healthcare Demand Modelling**Actions:**

1	Update model assumptions as data becomes available.
2	Routine healthcare demand modelling to be paused.

Transition to HPSC**Actions:**

1	Continue to advocate for permanent modelling and statistics unit within the HPSC.
2	Follow up with colleagues in New Zealand regarding permanent modelling structure.
3	Continue work on enabling Geospatial Group access to small area data.

Miscellaneous Actions:**Next Meeting:** 6 April 2022