

Chapter 33

Risk Management and Risk Communication in the Case of Vector–Borne Disease: Case of Macedonia – Risk Management in VBDs

Sekovska Blagica

University St. Kiril and Methodius, Macedonia

Stefanovska Jovana

University St. Kiril and Methodius, Macedonia

ABSTRACT

Change in environmental and socio-economic, emerging zoonotic diseases will be an increasing challenge for public health in Europe and in Macedonia also. The risks and consequences triggered by vector-borne diseases (VBD) for public health in Macedonia are just starting to emerge in public awareness. This is clearly shown by recent events such as spread of hemorrhagic fevers in Europe. The term “public health” in the scope of this chapter suggests re-conceptualization of public health by adapting the risk governance framework developed by the International Risk Governance Council (IRGC) for this purpose. The IRGC approach is distinguished from more classical risk governance approaches, inter alia, by an explicit inclusion of a systematic concern assessment. However, unfortunately, not all countries are adapted on this innovative public health model. This chapter shows results of a risk management study based on interview in depth with the officials regard public health risk, in frame of one health concept in the Republic of Macedonia.

INTRODUCTION

Vector-borne diseases (VBD), account for 17% of the estimated global burden of all infectious diseases. Their burden and economic impact continue to be very high. (Report of an informal expert consultation SEARO, New Delhi, 7-8 April 2014, WHO). Environmental and socio-economic changes mean that emerging diseases, particularly vector-borne diseases, will become an increasing challenge for the risk governance of human and veterinary health in Europe and in the Macedonia. The risks and the consequences triggered by vector-borne diseases for (veterinary) Public Health in Europe are just starting to emerge in public awareness and to be treated in spirit of in health approach. In order to meet the new challenges of Public Health, a re-conceptualization of Public Health is suggested and outlined within the EDENext “White Paper: Public Health and Vector-Borne Diseases. A New Concept for Risk Governance” (2012, see also: Schmidt et al 2013). In this frame, we were researched risk management concept in Republic of Macedonia.

Communication plays a central role and interacts with all elements. Therefore, aspects of communication were integrated on all analysed levels. Considered communication aspects in this study include the analysis of the communication process at the governmental level (internal communication between different departments), at the interface between the government and stakeholders, and between the government or stakeholders and the public (top-down approaches). Perception and communication patterns of recognized top-down approaches as well as information expectations towards authorities or stakeholders on the micro-level are analysed (bottom-up approaches).

During this, study realization, 12 experts on macro and mezzo level were interviewed. Interviews in depth with experts on vector-borne disease, will inform us about actual organizational structure and strategy about risk health management, and about experience with communication in case of possible health risk connected with vector-borne diseases in Republic of Macedonia. The person (experts) who were interviewed on macro level were representatives from:

- Ministry of health of Republic of Macedonia,
- State Crisis management center,
- State Institute for public health,
- Food and veterinary agency and
- Epidemiology institute.

On mezzo level were interviewed representatives (experts) from:

- State Clinic for infectious disease and febrile conditions in frame of State Clinical center and Medical faculty,
- Representatives from regional units of State Institute for public health, such as Center for public health - Skopje and Center for public health –Prilep,
- Doctors chamber of Republic of Macedonia,
- Veterinary chamber of Republic of Macedonia,
- Macedonian farmers’ federation and
- Representative from the Veterinary institute that is in the frame of Faculty for veterinary medicine in Skopje.

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