

Food borne diseases in Kenya

Ombui, J N; Kagiko, M M; Arimi, S M

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Abstract

Objectives: To determine the occurrence of food borne disease outbreaks in Kenya and the efforts employed to combat them. Design: Cross-sectional survey. Setting: Forty two districts in Kenya between 1970 and 1993. Study subjects: Food borne disease outbreak episodes due to *Staphylococcus aureus*, *Clostridium perfringens*, *Clostridium botulinum*, *Bacillus cereus*, *Escherichia coli*, *Campylobacter jejuni*, *Yersinia enterocolitica*, *Listeria monocytogenes*, chemicals, aflatoxin, plant and animal poisons. Outcome measures: Number and aetiological causes of foodborne disease outbreaks reported in the study period. Results: Thirty seven food poisoning outbreaks were reported to the Ministry of Health from various parts of the country in the study period 1970 to 1993, and only 13 of these involving a total of 926 people were confirmed to be due to particular aetiological agents. Foods that were involved included milk and milk products, meat and meat products, maize flour, bread, scones and other wheat products, vegetables and lemon pie pudding. A high number of food poisoning cases were treated as outpatients in various health facilities. Conclusion: Under-reporting, inadequate investigation of outbreaks and inadequate diagnostic facilities suggest that food borne disease outbreaks are more than is recorded by the Ministry of Health.