

CONGENITAL SYPHILIS QUARTERLY SURVEILLANCE REPORT– MARCH 2020

Introduction

In order to monitor progress towards elimination of congenital syphilis (CS), South Africa included CS on its revitalised national Notifiable Medical Conditions (NMC) surveillance platform in 2017. CS is a category 2 NMC which means all health care workers are required to notify cases through the paper-based or electronic forms within 7 days of diagnosis. In addition to the NMC platform, CS surveillance is complemented monitoring RPR positive results from infants/ children < 2years.

Methods

The CS surveillance team at the Centre for HIV and STIs extracts data on notified cases and RPR positive results from infants/ children < 2years from the NICD Surveillance Data warehouse (SDW) for case classification and analysis respectively. Counts, frequencies and percentages were used to describe trends in clinical notifications as well as RPR results by calendar quarter, district and province. Data for the period 1st July 2017 – 21st March was extracted on the 6th April 2020.

Results

In the period July 2017 – March 2020, there were 655 clinical notifications of CS and 8722 RPR positive results from infants/ children < 2 years. Over the period there has been a steady increase in the both the number of clinical notifications and the number of RPR positive results from infants/ children (see Figure 1 and Table 1). Clinical notifications were received from 94 facilities in 36 districts. In the most recent quarter (January- March 2020); we received 99 clinical notifications and 1068 RPR positive results. These clinical notifications were received from 31 facilities in 20 districts.

Discussion and limitations

There was a general increase in the number of congenital cases notified throughout the surveillance period. There was a similar trend in the number of RPR positive results, suggesting a true increase in the burden of congenital syphilis in the country. The increases observed in the notifications could be due to improved notifications or a true increase in the number of CS cases diagnosed. Limitations in these data include under-reporting of cases by the facilities and lack of verification of the clinical notifications.

Contact: tendesayikc@nicd.ac.za

Figure 1: Trends in CS clinical notifications and RPR positive specimens by quarter July 2017 – March 2020



- Blue line- Number of clinical notifications received through the NMC platform by calendar quarter. NICD started coordinating the NMC programme and receiving clinical notifications mid-2017.
- Orange bars – Number of RPR positive results from infants/ children who are confirmed to be < 24 months at specimen collection by calendar quarter collected from the laboratory (via NICD Surveillance Data Warehouse). The dotted orange line is the trend line assuming a linear relation between positive RPRs and calendar quarters. These represent infants being screened for syphilis either because they were exposed (maternal history of RPR+) or syphilis is suspected clinically.

Table 1: CS clinical notifications by calendar quarter, district and province July 2017- March 2020

District	Province	Q3 17	Q4 17	Q1 18	Q2 18	Q3 18	Q4 18	Q1 19	Q2 19	Q3 19	Q4 19	Q1 20	Total
Alfred Nzo	EC								2				2
Nelson Mandela Bay	EC								1	2			3
Buffalo City	EC				1		1		2				4
OR Tambo	EC							1	2	1			4
Sarah Baartman	EC		3	2	1			1				1	8
Amathole	EC									1			1
Xhariep	FS					1							1
Thabo Mutsanyane	FS					1	1						2
Fezile Dabi	FS									3		1	4
Mangaung	FS		1	1	4	2	1	2	1	0	0		12
West Rand	GP							2					2
City of Tshwane Metro	GP	0	0	0	1	5	2	7	10	7	6	4	42
City of Johannesburg	GP	2	2	4	3	2	0	14	10	6	10	10	63
Ekurhuleni	GP	1		2	2	8	16	7	13	8	11	9	77
West Rand	GP							2					2
uMgungundlovu	KZN		3	0	1	3	10	15	22	21	11	7	93
Harry Gwala	KZN					1							1
Ugu	KZN		1			1	2					3	7
uMhlabiyathini	KZN					1			2	0	1		4
Umzinyathi	KZN					5			1				6
uThukela	KZN		1		1				2	4	3	2	13
Zululand	KZN				3			3	0	5	7	1	19
iLembe	KZN						1	1	9	4	8	16	39
King Cetshwayo	KZN		3	11	1	1		1	1	2	3	7	30
Amajuba	KZN		1				8	3	7	5	11	9	44
eThekweni	KZN		1		8	7	12	9	8	9	7	5	66
Capricorn	LP					2			1				3
Waterberg	LP						1	2	4			1	8

Ngakala	MP		1										1
Frances Baard	NC						5				1		6
Siyanda	NC								3	2	5	4	14
Dr KK	NW		2	2				2	1			3	10
West Coast	WC										3	1	4
Overberg	WC						1	2					3
Cape Winelands	WC					2		1		2		6	11
Eden	WC			4	1	1		2		2		4	14
City of Cape Town	WC		4		2	1	6	3	5	1	5	5	32
Total	All	3	23	26	29	44	67	80	107	85	92	99	655

EC= Eastern Cape; FS= Free State; GP= Gauteng Province; KZN= KwaZulu Natal; LP= Limpopo province; MP= Mpumalanga Province; NC= Northern Cape; NW= North West; WC= Western Cape