

Epidemiology and surveillance of meningococcal disease in Malta

Dr Charmaine Gauci, Dr Jackie Maistre Melillo, Disease Surveillance Unit, Malta

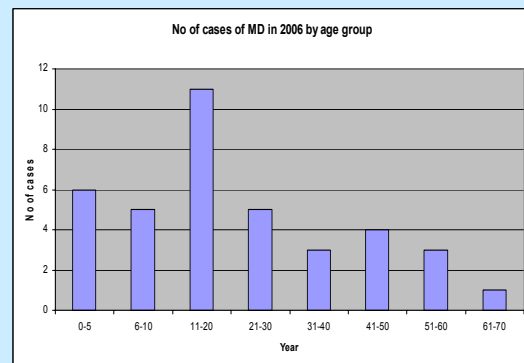
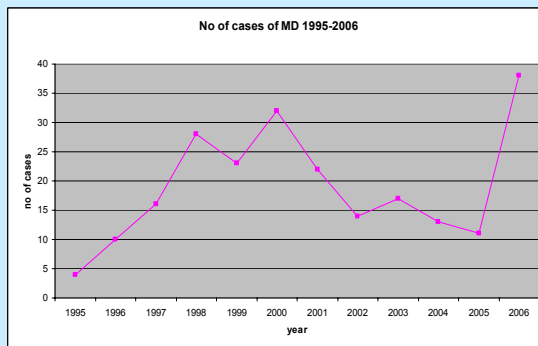
Background

Malta carries out surveillance on invasive meningococcal disease (MD). Outlined here are the methods used to ascertain the number of cases and conclusions that can be drawn from the pattern of incidence.

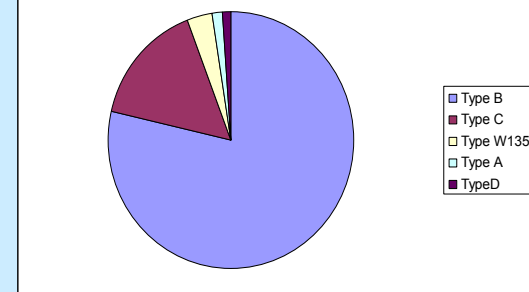
Methods

Meningococcal disease is a statutory notifiable disease. Medical doctors and medical diagnostic laboratories are obliged to notify cases even on clinical suspicion. Laboratory diagnostic methods for confirming MD include microscopy, culture and serotyping. Serotyping and subtyping is carried out in a meningococcal reference lab in the UK. Clinicians are encouraged to take blood cultures, petechial scrapings and throat swabs in order to ascertain the aetiological agent and the serotype.

Results



N.meningitidis serotypes in Malta 1995-2006



Conclusions

Meningococcal disease (MD) has become a public health concern in Malta since 1996 when there was a steady increase in the reported incidence of the disease until 2000. From a reported incidence of 0.8 per 100,000 cases in 1994, the reported incidence reached 8.2 per 100,000 in 2000. The reported incidence rate dropped after the year 2000 to reach a rate of 2.72 per 100,000 in 2005.

*The number of cases in 2006 increased to 38 (9.41 cases per 100,000 based on 2005 population rates). Of these, *Neisseria meningitidis* was cultured in 12 cases (31.6%). Of the serogroupable cases (12), serogroup B accounted for 10 cases (83.3%), serogroup C for one case (8.3%) and serogroup Y for one case (8.3%). There were no cases of , W-135 or serogroup D.*