

Outbreak Questionnaires and Interviewing Tips

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Share in chat: Are you currently involved in interviewing cases for routine case investigation(s) or outbreak(s)?

1

Objectives

1. Become familiar with interviewing tips
2. List information needed from outbreak questionnaires
3. Describe process for developing questionnaires
4. Describe methods for administering questionnaires
5. Discuss potential concerns of respondents
6. Consider challenges of outbreak investigation



2

2

1. Interviewing Tips

- Interviewing Cardinal Rules:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HNZm7z_JELw
(32 min)
- The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly:
<https://youtu.be/8oigheug0L4> (12 min)



3

3

2. Purpose of Questionnaires

For outbreak investigations

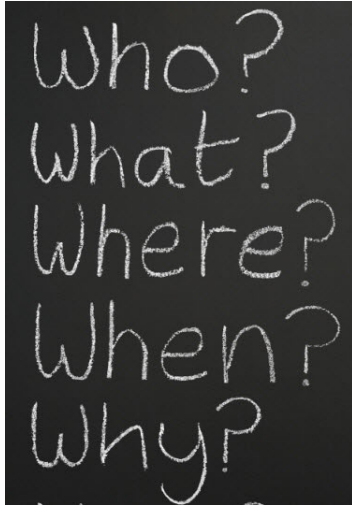
Gather information for generating and testing **hypotheses** about cause of outbreak



4

4

Characterize the outbreak



3. Developing the questionnaire

Develop hypothesis:

- Interview a few ill people
- Use open-ended questions
- Look for common themes among responses

Test hypothesis using focused questionnaire:

- Collect facts that lead to acceptance or rejection

Testing Your Hypotheses

Use closed-ended questions that need no interpreting

- Require yes or no answer
- Specific, without embroidered details

Examples:

- *"Did you eat the potato salad?"*
- *"Did you ride the MAX train on Thursday last week? On Friday last week?"*



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7

7

Writing the questionnaire

Customizable template questionnaires are available at OHA ACDP website

→ Foodborne outbreak investigation tools

<https://www.oregon.gov/oha/PH/DISEASES/CONDITIONS/COMMUNICABLEDISEASE/OUTBREAKS/GASTROENTERITIS/Pages/Outbreak-Investigation-Tools.aspx>

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8

8

☐ case ☐ control ☐ exclude Name / i.d. _____

WEDDING RECEPTION (2002-65)

☐ check if proxy respondent _____

Phone _____ Age _____ Sex ☐ M ☐ F

E-mail _____ Interviewed by _____ on _____

Did you attend the Wedding reception? ☐ yes ☐ no *if no, STOP; if yes, CONTINUE*

FOOD EXPOSURES

Did you attend the rehearsal dinner? ☐ yes ☐ no

Let me walk you through the food items served at the wedding reception.

About what time did you eat? _____

For each item, give me a "yes" or "no" answer if you remember eating or even tasting it.

Reception Food	Y	N	?
Veg Lasagna A	☐	☐	☐
Garlic Chick Lasagna B	☐	☐	☐
Greek Salad C	☐	☐	☐
Italian dressing D	☐	☐	☐
Bread Sticks E	☐	☐	☐
Cake F	☐	☐	☐
Punch G	☐	☐	☐
Water H	☐	☐	☐
_____ I	☐	☐	☐
_____ J	☐	☐	☐

How many drinks with ice? _____

Have you been sick at all since the reception? ☐ yes ☐ no *if no, STOP; if yes, CONTINUE*

Who was interviewed?

What was the exposure of concern (where, when)?

Looking for the "why": possible risk factors

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9

☐ case ☐ control ☐ exclude Name / i.d. _____

SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

Let me read you a list of symptoms. For each one, give me a "yes" or "no." Did you have any...

Y	N	?		Y	N	?	
H	☐	☐	headache	L	☐	☐	chills
N	☐	☐	nausea	D	☐	☐	any diarrhea or loose stools
V	☐	☐	vomiting	J	☐	☐	if yes to diarrhea, did you have 3 or more loose stools in any 24-hour period?
M	☐	☐	myalgia (muscle aches)	B	☐	☐	any blood in stools
G	☐	☐	abdominal (stomach, belly) cramps	O	☐	☐	other _____
T	☐	☐	unusual fatigue (feeling tired)				
F	☐	☐	fever (if yes, ☐ subjective or _____ ° (max.)				

What symptoms and clinical information?

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10

10

Time factors:

- When did symptoms begin?
- How long did they last?

ONSET AND DURATION

Get precise answers for onset time. If you don't get a date and time, they won't fit on an epi curve. [Their] estimates are OK. Prompt as needed: "What is your best guess of the time?" "Don't let them get away with vague stuff like "morning" or "after midnight." Be careful with times such as "midnight" or early morning hours – which day do they mean? Midnight exactly is the _____ of the day.

On what date did you first feel sick?

☐ Sat, Oct 5 ☐ Sun, Oct 6 ☐ Mon, Oct 7 ☐ Tues, Oct 8 ☐ _____

[If applicable] **On what day did you first have any vomiting or diarrhea?**

☐ Sat, Oct 5 ☐ Sun, Oct 6 ☐ Mon, Oct 7 ☐ Tue, Oct 8 ☐ _____

[If applicable] **At what time did the vomiting or diarrhea begin? [ENTER A SPECIFIC HOUR!!!]**

☐ _____ am ☐ noon ☐ _____ pm ☐ midnight (end of day)

Are you still feeling sick now? ☐ yes ☐ no

If no, how long did you feel sick? _____ hours ☐ days

Is anyone in your household ill that did not attend the reception? ☐ yes ☐ no

If so, when did they become ill? _____ day, _____ time



Helpful to refer to calendar

11

11

How severe was illness?

MISCELLANY

Did you/Are you... (check all that apply; provide details [names, dates, phone numbers, etc.] at right.)

	Y	N	?		
W	☐	☐	☐	miss work or school?	<i>if yes, how many days? _____</i>
P	☐	☐	☐	see a physician/HCP?	<i>if yes, whom?</i>
E	☐	☐	☐	visit an ER?	<i>if yes, specify</i>
S	☐	☐	☐	give a stool specimen?	<i>if yes, when/to whom</i>
G	☐	☐	☐	already culture-positive?	<i>if yes, specify</i>
F	☐	☐	☐	[if no] willing to provide specimen?	
H	☐	☐	☐	get admitted to hospital overnight?	<i>if yes, how many nights? _____</i>

12

12

4. Methods for administering questionnaires

Telephone = *most common and efficient method*

- Quick
- Inexpensive
- Sensitive (does problem truly exist?)

- **Disadvantages:**

- Need cooperation from those called
- Possible bias: do those who answer phone differ from those who don't?



13

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Administering questionnaires

In-person interview

- More accurate to obtain complex information
 - When observations important
 - May enhance data quality
- Disadvantages
 - More expensive than phone
 - Time-consuming
 - Staff intensive



14

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Administering questionnaires

Web based (e.g., Survey Monkey, Inquisite, Google Forms)

Advantages:

- Quickly develop and launch questionnaire
- Can reach many people quickly
- Low cost and staff time

Disadvantages:

- Can't ask clarifying questions
- Responses may be less complete
- Ensure security of confidential health information

15

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Administering questionnaires

Direct (phone or in-person)

Self-administered (mail or web-based)

Proxy

- Parent (for child <18 years old), family member, caregiver
- May get **inaccurate** information



16

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5. Concerns among respondents

- Feel blamed or judged because of the outbreak or disease
- Feel threatened by you
- Mental status issues
- Undocumented status
- Outbreak in setting of illegal activities
- Businesses **fear** bad publicity, loss of clients/customers
- Missed work and loss of income for self or sick child
- Obtaining health care if no health insurance or access to care



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17

17

Concerns among Respondents



Some individuals selected for interview during outbreak investigation may challenge or question your legal authority in contacting them for interview

I'M FROM THE
GOVERNMENT,
I'M HERE
TO HELP



OAR 333-019-0000
Responsibility of Public Health
Authorities to Investigate Reportable
Diseases

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18

18

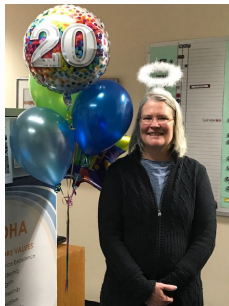
6. Challenges in outbreak investigations

- Time and staff constraints
- Reliance on others (e.g., school or long-term care facility)
- Uncertain how much to do, for how long, other priorities
- Using different skillset

You don't have to do this alone!

On-call ACDP epidemiologists or the Urgent Epidemiology Response Team (UERT) are available 24/7 to consult and assist with outbreaks.

ACDP: 971-673-1111



Questions?

