KEY SUCCESS FACTORS FOR SURVEYS OF ANTIMICROBIAL SALES AND USE IN THE EUROPEAN UNION

David Mackay, Jordi Torren-Edo & Kari Grave
European Medicines Agency, 7 Westferry Circus, London E14 4HB, United Kingdom

The European Surveillance of Veterinary Antimicrobials (ESVAC) project was established at the European Medicines Agency in 2009 following acceptance of a mandate from the European Commission.

The mandate requires the Agency to coordinate the collection of data on overall national sales, and consumption by major food producing species, of veterinary antimicrobial agents in Member States of the European Union and to publish this data on an annual basis.

In the first three years of operation the ESVAC Project has published a retrospective analysis of the overall sales of veterinary antimicrobial agents in 9 European countries over the period 2005-2009 (Grave et al., 2012) and in 2012 published its second report analysing harmonised overall sales data of veterinary antimicrobial agents in 19 Member States for 2010 (ESVAC, 2012). The third report on overall sales in 2011 will be published during 2013.

This is the first project to coordinate collecting harmonised data on sales of antimicrobials used in animals at a supra-national level on an annual basis. The success of the project to date has been built on extensive cooperation between the various national authorities involved in the project by establishing at an early stage a network of national representatives to promote effective communication. In the absence of legally binding obligations in all cases, it was also essential to engage early in the project with the stakeholders that ultimately own and supply the data on sales (animal health industry, wholesalers, distributors and pharmacists) to gain their confidence and ‘buy in’ to the objectives and outcomes of the project.

To achieve this rapid success and to secure continued development over time, it has been important to ensure that the objectives of the data collection are understood and agreed from the outset. In this case, the need to develop rational, data-led policies at European level for minimising the risks to animal and human health that may arise from the use of antimicrobials in veterinary medicine is seen by all parties as essential.

This presentation will outline with major technical, political, management and financial factors that need to come together to succeed in this highly sensitive area of policy. Other regions have expressed interest in the approach adopted in the EU, where several countries already had well-developed data collection systems, and the wider relevance of the approach adopted will be described.