

Behaviour risk factor and chronic disease surveillance systems in the 21 century – meeting the challenge

In the 'now-information' environment it is expected that the latest behaviour risk factor and chronic disease information will always be available for policy makers to make informed decisions and to monitor public health interventions. Although encouraging, that we are now in an evidence-based environment, it is an epidemiological challenge to meet the never-ending information needs. In this 'now-information' environment the processes of collecting, managing and analysing data are often assumed to occur instantaneous. To meet these epidemiological challenges the NSW Health Survey Program has implemented a surveillance system that has a continuous collection, analysis and reporting process that can be used across different surveys, population groups and topic areas to produce reports that include both actual and predicted estimates to meet the immediate and future needs of the users. This system maximises the use of meta-data and seamlessly interacts between different IT platforms and software using SAS as the driver. The system outputs the information as html, pdf, csv and gif files and also produces the final pdf report without the need for desk-topping, which can often impede the production of ongoing timely reports. The planned collection, analysis and reporting of the data, for over 50 different question modules collected over different time periods and for different population groups to 2012, automatically occurs through the use of system drivers. These system drivers have been designed so that new question modules, analysis methods and reporting outputs can easily be incorporated to meet the emerging and changing information needs of users.

**Margo Eyeson-Annan,
Raymond Ferguson,
Michael Giffin,
Matthew Gorringe,
Mazen Kassis, Baohui Yang**