

Use of a monitoring and surveillance system as part of a mixed mode design to assess nutrition intake in South Australia

The South Australian Monitoring and Surveillance System (SAMSS) has been in operation since July 2002. Approximately 600 interviews are conducted each month, by telephone, of a random representative sample of the South Australian population of all ages. While SAMSS can monitor chronic conditions, risk factors and other health priority areas over time, in Australia other information is lacking at a population level. One area in particular is nutrition. As a result SAMSS has been used as part of a mixed mode design, to not only assess high level indicators relating to nutrition but more specific food intakes. Over two months, in 2006, respondents to SAMSS aged 18 years and over were asked to complete a food frequency questionnaire. Respondents were also asked if they were prepared to have the food frequency data linked to the relevant variables from SAMSS. This presentation highlights the both the pros and cons of an ongoing surveillance system and a point in time survey and also some of the issues surrounding the used of mixed mode methodologies. By linking data from the two surveys, differences in the values of body mass index and the daily consumption of fruit and vegetables can be determined, in addition to the food frequency questionnaire providing more detailed consumption of food types, which can be compared to other data obtained as part of the monitoring system. This study highlights an alternative use of a monitoring system in order to obtain more in-depth information on a specific public health issue.

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