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Global Trend - Cholera

A global issue of concern is the spread of cholera, an infectious disease caused by ingestion of foods or water contaminated by the *Vibrio cholerae* bacterium.¹ Individuals who are infected with the bacterium must be treated rapidly with antibiotics and intravenous fluids, otherwise the disease can kill within hours due to dehydration caused by loss of fluids and severe diarrhea. Individuals infected with the bacterium can spread it through shedding particles into the environment, which might infect others as had occurred famously in London.² Currently, we are on the 7th global cholera pandemic, which has been ongoing since the 1960s and is endemic in several countries globally. Causes of cholera transmission are tied to water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) issues .

Cholera is an issue of great concern as it significantly impacts the poorest and most vulnerable populations, which includes young children and older adults. It is a preventable disease, yet environmental conditions and lack of resources and education continue to perpetuate the transmission of this disease. In 2022 alone, over 29 countries reported cholera cases or outbreaks and the case fatality ratio is sitting above acceptable (<1%) in these countries.³ In order to address this issue, funding needs to be organized to invest in water and sanitation infrastructure globally, as the worsening climate situation, humanitarian crises, and disease outbreaks continue to perpetuate the spread of the disease. The Global Task Force on Cholera Control (GTFCC) developed a roadmap to 2030, which aims to reduce cholera deaths by 90% through strategic activities directed at early detection, improving WASH, distributing oral cholera vaccines (despite global shortages limiting dosage to 1 dose), and improving partnerships for advocacy, resource mobilization, and technical assistance.³ These activities are possible to implement, as they can be linked to the control and surveillance of other diseases globally. The difficult work will be in improving WASH through funding and developing and distributing more vaccines.

References

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3. Cholera – global situation. World Health Organization. <https://www.who.int/emergencies/disease-outbreak-news/item/2023-DON437>. Published February 11, 2023. Accessed February 13, 2023.