

Transmissible Diseases

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DESCRIPTION

Our group focuses its activity in the area of the epidemiology of communicable diseases, developing lines of collaborative and multidisciplinary research in the surveillance, prevention and control mainly of the following communicable diseases: tuberculosis, HIV/sexually transmitted infections, hepatitis, vaccineable diseases, and vaccine hesitancy and vector borne diseases. In addition, we develop research in the area of community health workers (CHW) and their intervention in the migrant population with communicable diseases prevention and control.

- Tuberculosis:
 - Evaluation of interventions to improve surveillance and tuberculosis (TB) control, diagnosis, treatment, and prevention.
 - Predictors of TB in a cohort of TB-infected contacts to determine the disease incidence at 2 and 5 years in Catalonia.
 - Characterization of TB in vulnerable populations: immigrants, homeless, children, bad adherence TB patients, HIV, etc.
 - Latent TB infection characterization, prescription, and treatment completion in vulnerable populations.
- Sexually transmitted infections (STI) / HIV:
 - Use of information and communication technologies for the prevention and control of STI/HIV: a) Creation of Apps to promote sexual health both in HIV-positive and HIV-negative men. b) Use of Apps to offer rapid tests outside the sanitary circuit



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- New technologies: APPS for HIV and STD contact tracing.
- Study of the proportion of pelvic inflammatory disease due to chlamydia.
- Study of HIV contacts to determine the incidence among them.
- CHW for communicable diseases control: with the immigration increase we have incorporated CHW that aids in the prevention and control of these diseases. They act as mediators and translators.
- Incidence studies of mumps, whooping cough, and STIs, as well as the influence of the crisis on some communicable diseases such as TB and hepatitis. Study of factors influencing the transmission of pertussis in homes as well as the effectiveness of immunization and chemoprophylaxis.
- Outbreaks:
 - Investigation of the causes and implementation of control measures as in the case of different outbreaks by norovirus.
 - Characterization of Mpox cases in Barcelona during two epidemics and implementation of prevention and control measures.
- To monitor vaccine hesitancy, study its determinants, and develop interventions to reduce and prevent it:
 - Estimation of vaccine refusal in families with children under 15 years-old in Barcelona.
 - Knowledge, attitudes and beliefs about systematic childhood vaccines in pediatric health-care workers in Barcelona.
- Vector-borne diseases: cases surveillance and environmental factors related to vector distribution, specially *Aedes albopictus* and *Culex pipiens*, and their impact on risk of local transmission of arboviral diseases.

The group is composed of a multidisciplinary group of epidemiologists, public health professionals and doctors of different specialties who work in the clinic field, at the laboratory or in the epidemiological surveillance of communicable infectious diseases.

MAIN LINES OF RESEARCH

Tuberculosis:

- Use of new technologies to improve tuberculosis (TB) control, diagnostic, treatment, and prevention: video DOT, website of the Barcelona TB Research Unit, twitter and Enfermedades Emergentes Journal. Role of diabetes in different clinical presentations and evolution of TB.
- Evaluation of COVID-19 pandemic in the prevention and control activities in tuberculosis patients and the impact on the future incidence.
- Evaluation of interventions to improve surveillance and tuberculosis (TB) control, diagnosis, treatment among injecting drug users.
- Predictors of TB in a cohort of TB-infected contacts to determine the disease incidence at 2 and 5 years in Catalonia.
- Characterization of TB in vulnerable populations: immigrants, homeless, children, bad adherence TB patients, HIV, Diabetes, etc.
- Latent TB infection characterization, prescription, and treatment completion in vulnerable populations.

Sexually transmitted infections (STI) / VIH:

- Use of information and communication technologies for the prevention and control of STI/HIV:
 - a) Creation of Apps to promote sexual health both in HIV-positive and HIV-negative men.
 - b) Use of Apps to offer rapid tests outside the sanitary circuit
- New technologies: APPS for HIV and STD contact tracing.
- Characterization of Mpox cases in Barcelona during two epidemics.
- Study of HIV contacts to determine the incidence among them.

Community health workers (CHW) for communicable diseases control: with the immigration increase we have incorporated CHW aid in the prevention and control of these diseases. They act as mediators and translators.

Incidence studies of mumps, whooping cough and STIs, as well as the influence of the crisis on some



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communicable diseases such as TB and hepatitis. Study of factors influencing the transmission of pertussis in homes as well as the effectiveness of immunization and chemoprophylaxis.

Outbreaks and COVID-19:

- Investigation of the causes and implementation of control measures as in the case of different outbreaks by norovirus.
- COVID-19 outbreak characterization in different settings in Barcelona city.
- Impact of COVID-19 in incidence and mortality in nursing homes and associated factors.
- Vaccination hesitancy and COVID-19.
- To assess if there is a difference in the amount of viable SARS-CoV-2 virus released by the vaccinated individuals in comparison with non-vaccinated. Can vaccinated people transit COVID-19? To study the systemic and local immune response in both groups of patients.

To monitor vaccine hesitancy, study its determinants, and develop interventions to reduce it and prevent it:

- Estimation of vaccine refusal in families with children under 15 years-old in Barcelona.
- knowledge, attitudes, and beliefs about systematic childhood vaccines in pediatric healthcare workers in Barcelona.

Vector-borne diseases:

- Environmental factors related to vector distribution, specially *Aedes albopictus*, and *Culex pipiens*, and their impact on risk of local transmission of arboviral diseases.

SCIENTIFIC CHALLENGES

- Prevent sexually transmitted infections and other transmissible diseases.
- Evaluate HIV screening programs in different gay venues.
- Improve detection and research into causes of C hepatitis.
- Improve detection and control measures of outbreaks.

- Improve adherence to tuberculosis and latent tuberculosis infection.
- STD/HIV and TB contact tracing and screening.
- Cost-effective analysis of public health interventions.

ACTIVE GRANTS

- Montalvo Porro, Tomas. An early warning and response system for the detection and prevention of vector-borne disease importation and spread in the Mediterranean (IDAlert). IDAlert. Unión Europea. Duration: 2022-2027. 93.917,00 €.

GRANTS AWARDED

- Millet Vilanova, Joan Pau. Caracterización y factores asociados a tener un tratamiento de la tuberculosis alargado en España. 1451/2022. Sociedad Española de Neumología y Cirugía Torácica (SEPAR). Duration: 2023-2024. 12.000,00 € (ASPB).

DOCTORAL THESES DEFENDED

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- Tamarit Romero, Arantxa. Evaluación de herramientas para un manejo asistencial más personalizado, integral y eficaz para las personas con tuberculosis. 11/12/2023. Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona. Supervisors: Vilaplana, Cristina; Sánchez MontalvÀ, Adrià; Millet Vilanova, Joan Pau.

SCIENTIFIC PRODUCTION

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