

The Use of a Modified Delphi Approach to Engage Stakeholders in Zoonotic Disease Research Priority Setting

Sawford et al. (2014)

<https://doi.org/10.1186/1471-2458-14-182>

For which topic were research priorities identified?

zoonoses

In which location was the research priority setting conducted?

Australia - Australia

Why was it conducted at all?

Hendra virus was first isolated from horses in 1994 after an outbreak of severe illness in a racing stable. Two cases of Hendra virus human infection occurred as a result of contact with infected horses, one of which was fatal. From 1994 until 2010 spillover events from flying foxes to horses occurred infrequently and intermittently, with a total of 14 known spillover events in the 16-year period. Though cases were rare, the human and equine case fatality rates were 57% and 75% respectively. However, in 2011 the situation changed dramatically when Hendra virus spilled over from flying foxes into horses 18 times within a 12-week period. While the causes of this cluster of cases in horses remain poorly understood, the public health response has focused on reducing the exposure of people in the equine industry to sick and potentially infected horses and thereby the risk of human infection. Therefore there is a need to engage with 'horse people', including individuals who own horses as well as those in regular contact with horses, to understand their perceived vulnerability to Hendra virus, their uptake of recommended risk mitigation strategies, and their unaddressed concerns and fears. This need led to funding of a three-year research project investigating these human dimensions of the Hendra virus challenge titled 'Horse owners and Hendra Virus: A Longitudinal cohort study To Evaluate Risk' (The HHALTER project).

What was the objective?

to refine the research priorities of the 'Horse owners and Hendra Virus: A Longitudinal cohort study To Evaluate Risk' (The HHALTER project) project prior to the primary research activity within the project

What was the outcome?

a ranking list of 5 research areas

How long did the research prioritization take?

No information provided.

Which methods were used to identify research priorities?

Delphi

How were the priorities for research identified exactly?

Step 1: Delphi round 1: participants were asked: Please list topic areas relating to horse owners and Hendra virus that you think should be priority areas for questions posed to horse owners in the surveys conducted by the HHALTER project. Step 2: data processing: content analysis, resulting in more than 450 topics organized into 18 areas. Step 3: Delphi round 2: participants shown each area and its associated topics and asked to rate each area individually and to rate importance of each topic to their role/professional, participants also asked to select their top five priority topic areas

Which stakeholders took part?

Policy developers and implementers, horse industry representatives, researchers, horse healthcare providers, wildlife health managers. Delphi round 1: 101 participants. Delphi round 2: 68 participants.

How were stakeholders recruited?

Stakeholders were identified through a number of sources, including the professional contact network of the HHALTER project steering committee, relevant conference proceedings, and stakeholder websites. Individuals contacted included: policy developers and implementers in key government agencies in all states and territories; known experts engaged in a range of Hendra virus-related activities; research leaders in charge of National Hendra Virus Research Program funded projects; members of the Intergovernmental Hendra Virus Taskforce; and public health leaders in Hendra virus-affected states. Stakeholders who responded to the first questionnaire were sent the second questionnaire.

Were stakeholders actively involved or did they just participate?

Stakeholders were mere participants of the research prioritization process; they were not actively involved in the