

Using a partnership-based approach to initiate invalid RDT surveillance at sentinel sites in Papua New Guinea

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Background: STRIVE PNG is a vector borne disease implementation research project that has adopted an explicit partnership-based approach based on transparency, respect and mutual accountability between the project and partners including the National Malaria Control Program (NMCP) at the National Department of Health in PNG (NDOH). As outcome of this partnership is the inclusion of STRIVE PNG in NDOH malaria technical working group (TWG) where the project provides evidence to support and guide decision making.

Analysis/Argument: In March 2022, the NMCP requested if the project could provide data on invalid malaria RDT (mRDT) results through its febrile illness sentinel surveillance system. Prior to this request the system had not routinely collected invalid results or mRDT brand detail and lot batch numbers. The project was able to rapidly adapt data collection to include standard operating procedures for collecting invalid mRDT data to report to the NMCP.

Outcome/Results: Since undertaking the rapid adaptation of the system in March 2022 to include invalid mRDT data we have observed 43 invalid mRDTs results in the system. We have been able to characterise these by mRDT brand. Data on invalids is available in real-time within the STRIVE-Tupaia data aggregation and visualisation platform. Static reports are also routinely being provided to the NMCP.

Conclusion: mRDT quality and performance is an important consideration for malaria control programs, especially in settings where multiple mRDT brands are in use. The partnership-based approach that STRIVE PNG has adopted led to a relationship whereby trust in the project by the NMCP allowed for transparency in requesting and reporting data important to decision makers. It also highlights the strength of sentinel surveillance systems to rapidly adapt to changing program needs.

Disclosure of Interest Statement: The Burnet Institute recognise the considerable contribution that industry partners make to professional and research activities. We also recognise the need for transparency of disclosure of potential conflicts of interest by acknowledging these relationships in publications and presentations.