



Memorandum

Date August 04, 2011

From Lee L. Zwanziger, Ph.D.
Designated Federal Officer, Risk Communication Advisory Committee

Subject Background, August 15, 2011 Risk Communication Advisory Committee Meeting

To Members, Risk Communication Advisory Committee

FDA's Risk Communication Advisory Committee (RCAC) will hold its next meeting on August 15-16, 2011. On August 15, 2011, the Committee will discuss challenges of communicating about evolving methodology in the attribution of foodborne illness. Estimating the number of illnesses, hospitalizations, and deaths caused by major pathogens is the first step in the development of disease prevention strategies. Estimating the proportions of these illnesses due to specific food sources (food source attribution) is a necessary second step towards identifying the sources that cause substantial preventable human illness and measuring progress toward public health goals resulting from public health interventions applied to those food sources. Consequently, FDA, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and the U.S. Department of Agriculture/Food Safety Inspection Service have begun a joint initiative, called the Interagency Food Safety Analytics Collaboration (IFSAC), to improve our collective understanding of source attribution of infections to specific foods and settings. While the IFSAC works to improve methodology, we are also committed to keeping stakeholders informed and engaged, and are seeking advice about how to communicate most effectively. The following websites will be helpful background information for this topic:

How big a problem is foodborne illness in the United States?

CDC's new estimates of foodborne illness: <http://www.cdc.gov/foodborneburden/index.html>

What information is currently available about attribution?

The June issue of CDC Vital Signs: <http://www.cdc.gov/VitalSigns/FoodSafety/index.html>

Also, outbreak data from CDC identifies food vehicle:

http://www.cdc.gov/outbreaknet/pdf/2007MMWRSurveillanceOutbreaks_ExpandedTable2_WEB.pdf

Illness/food information from FDA is usually specific to a particular incident, like these examples illustrate. These examples do not get at the question of relative attribution of illness to food categories:

<http://www.fda.gov/NewsEvents/Newsroom/PressAnnouncements/ucm263158.htm>

<http://www.fda.gov/NewsEvents/PublicHealthFocus/ucm151049.htm>

What studies already exist that contribute to the available information on attribution?

<http://foodrisk.org/epi/attribution/>

What have stakeholders said about their interest regarding attribution?

Three public meetings were held in 2010 by CDC, FDA and FSIS to gather input on performance metrics for food safety. One of the main observations was a need for improved methods for attribution, and a need to coordinate this work across the three federal agencies. IFSAC is an answer to that request. Transcripts from two of these public meetings are available here:

<http://www.fda.gov/Food/NewsEvents/ConstituentUpdates/ucm224796.htm>

Interested stakeholders outside the government use data from CDC and sometimes from other sources to develop their own attribution estimates. This is one recent example.

Batz, M. B., et al. (2004) Identifying the most significant microbiological foodborne hazards to public health: A new risk ranking model. Food Safety Research Consortium, Discussion Paper Series No.1. <http://www.thefsrc.org/Discussion%20Papers/FRSC-DP-01.pdf>

And a follow-on paper looking at rankings by cost of illness:
<http://www.rwjf.org/files/research/72267report.pdf>

You may also find it helpful to review the following two readings, from the May and November meetings of 2010:

Fischhoff, B. (1999). What do patients want? Help in making effective choices. *Effective Clinical Practice*, 2(3): 198-200.
http://www.acponline.org/clinical_information/journals_publications/ecp/julaug99/fischhoff.pdf

Kaptan, G., Fischhoff, B. (2010). Sticky decisions: Peanut butter in a time of *Salmonella*. *Emerging Infectious Diseases*, 16, 900-904. <http://www.cdc.gov/eid/content/16/5/900.htm>

On August 16, 2011, the Committee will present "Communicating Risks and Benefits: An Evidence-Based User's Guide." This volume is the result of work, as discussed in previous meetings, by current and former members of the Risk Communication Advisory Committee. The book covers have been posted but no further background material will be needed for discussion of this topic.

We all are looking forward to a very interesting meeting. Please do not hesitate to contact me if I can be of any help. Best wishes for safe and pleasant travels.