



Public Health
England

Protecting and improving the nation's health



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Chief Executive

Friday message

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Dear everyone

Sierra Leone has been declared Ebola free, having passed a milestone set by the World Health Organisation (WHO) of going more than 42 days without a new case. This is a major achievement for the people of Sierra Leone and by those who have helped them, including our own staff, first in bringing the infection under control and then eliminating it. Around 150 of our staff who went out to work on the front line in Sierra Leone are due to receive their Ebola medals over the next couple of weeks.

Our TB Research Programme at PHE Porton is playing an important role in the global effort to develop a more effective vaccine against TB. Over the last two years, they have been working with the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation as part of the Grand Challenges in Global Health TB Vaccine Accelerator Programme to develop a model of natural transmission of TB that will act as a more discriminatory method of evaluating potential vaccine candidates and other interventions. This work has culminated in the award of a major new grant of \$4.8M to refurbish the preclinical vaccine facility and provide a scaled up model of TB transmission. The award is a reflection of the unique blend of skills within our research department, including aerobiology and high containment microbiology, through to animal modelling and engineering, and involved team members from the TB group, Biosafety, Biological Investigations Group, Histopathology, Facilities Management, Finance and Business Development.

Earlier this week we held a one-day meeting bringing together our eight PHE WHO collaborating centres. These centres, with the prestigious WHO kitemark, cover wide-ranging public health topics: mass gatherings and global health security; antimicrobial resistance and healthcare associated infections; chemical incidents; virus reference and research on special pathogens; diphtheria and streptococcal infections; haemophilus influenza and streptococcus pneumonia; laboratory and diagnostic support; and health in prisons. Not only do these centres represent beacons of our scientific excellence but they also provide vital links with the international health community, and there was much shared learning through the day around how we can maximise their reach and impact as part of PHE's contribution to improving global health.

This week PHE has been running [#PHEDataWeek](#), a week of social media activity on the varied and often ground-breaking work we do on data. #PHEDataWeek has seen blogs, infographics, tweets and stats about data, covering subjects from data science and 'big data', to cancer and has seen lots of engagement. It is timely, therefore, that on Tuesday we published the results from one of PHE's biggest data projects. The complete cancer [Routes to Diagnosis data](#), which covers more than two million patients diagnosed with cancer from 2006 to 2013. This publicly available, big data project explains how people are diagnosed, with associated survival rates, for 56 different cancer sites. When the project started in 2006, almost 25% of cancers (1 in 4) were diagnosed as an emergency. In 2013, this figure had fallen to 20% (1 in 5). This matters because survival rates for those diagnosed as an emergency are much worse.

And finally, recognising work as a health outcome is at the heart of improving health and wellbeing. Essentially, having a job is good for your health and particularly for your mental health. With the help of a social enterprise in Brixton, the Mosaic Clubhouse, PHE is taking on to the payroll initially three people with mental health problems who have been long-term unemployed. I am sure this will be a great success for them and for PHE and that we can extend this to more people as time goes on.

With best wishes