

# EAN MONTHLY NEWSFLASH

## June Edition

### Spotlight : Interview of Ines Steffens

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*In this issue, we interview Ines Steffens, Editor-in-Chief and the Head of the Editorial Office at Eurosurveillance.*

*Thank you very much for your time and insights, Ines!*



#### **What is your current role and how has it changed over the last 5 years?**

I am the Editor-in-Chief and Head of the Editorial Office at Eurosurveillance. Thus, some things in my working life such as selection, evaluation and clearance of articles never change. However, the pandemic has changed the nature of our work and the way in which we look at scientific production and publishing – how we contribute to that, and how we, together with the people in our community, approach scientific publishing. Do we need to publish nearly all the submissions that we get? I mean, how should we as a community deal with the sheer volume of articles? This is also something we have been discussing with editors from other renowned journals to see what we can do differently and where we can learn.

#### **How does the advancement of AI affect your work, both within your department and in reviewing manuscripts?**

At a recent conference on research integrity, experts were discussing that in, say, 20 years' time, rules and declarations for using AI tools in publishing, will be a thing of the past. Already today, no one expects authors to declare the use of spell checkers or Grammarly, which are also essentially AI tools, even though not generative. No matter what we're going to do, AI is here to stay, and we must find smart ways of using it for the benefit of our community. There are already algorithms in place that use generative AI tools to create summaries and evaluate completeness of articles or even their quality. But all AI use needs human oversight. We also need to learn about the (prompting) questions we can ask generative AI tools, and thus become more skilled at using it. For our editorial team, we're planning a training on how the future of AI could look in publishing and how

possibility of creating visual abstracts using AI together with one of our board members who is a professor in AI. We are also studying the declared use of AI in the submissions that Eurosurveillance receives. Certain terms or phrases can point towards undeclared AI use, and our first impression is that the use of AI in Eurosurveillance articles is similar to what other journals have been finding as well. However, we need to dig deeper and see which sections of manuscripts are authors more prone to use AI for – both declared and undeclared.

### **What is next for Ines, and what is next for Eurosurveillance?**

We have a lot of day-to-day routine work, we see change and we try to embrace it. We still hope we can do a scenario-based workshop together with EAN and others to challenge the future of publishing and science communication. Perhaps this will be something that the next person in my position will take into the future, while I spend parts of my time in a home near Mt. Pelion in Greece. But I am not leaving yet! At present, I am also busy with preparing a workshop for the next the project review module of the fellowship programme in Lisbon, in August. And a personal goal for the near future is to connect Eurosurveillance with other public health journals that are not for profit, share experiences and be stronger together.

### **This begs the question: what challenges do not-for-profit public health journals face?**

Sometimes it's the buy-in. For institutions publishing editorially independent journals, it may not be evident at all times what's in it for them, compared with other demands for resources that they may face. Moreover, some articles that, for example, publicly funded public health journals publish, are not considered very 'attractive', so they won't be necessarily cited even though they are important for the work of public health experts and policy makers. We still want to help share findings from important areas in our field that will not be visible otherwise in form of articles in a scholarly journal. It can also be a challenge to demonstrate the impact of such publications. But luckily there are some new tools such as Overton, that allow us to evaluate the impact that goes beyond classical measurements, and we will need to investigate this together with colleagues and authors.

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## **EAN celebrated World Food Safety Day 2024**

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**Johanna Takkinen** is a Finnish veterinarian with a specialized degree in food and environmental hygiene, additionally holding a Master's degree in Public Health. Her early career involved working in various municipal food and environmental laboratories, and practicing as a veterinarian for production animals. These experiences sparked her passion for public health epidemiology.

In 1999, she was accepted into a two-year European Programme for Intervention Epidemiology Training (EPIET) at the Robert Koch Institute, marking a significant



found the experience enriching and rewarding.

In 2005, when the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) became operational, Johanna joined as a senior expert. Since then, she has been serving the public health in the European Union (EU), initially as the Head of the Food and Waterborne Diseases Programme and in 2020 as a principal expert for food- and waterborne diseases. While supporting the establishment of EU surveillance for infectious diseases, she has been instrumental in driving forward molecular typing-enhanced surveillance and coordinating cross-border foodborne outbreak investigations in close collaboration with experts in countries and the European Food Safety Agency (EFSA), in the spirit of One Health.

**See our post and follow us on Instagram !!!**

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## Note from the field : Henrieke Prins an EAN deployment

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*Henrieke Prins (EPIET fellow at the Robert Koch Institute, 2021-2023) went on a GOARN deployment in Beirut at the WHO Lebanon Country Office.*



Lebanon has a history of multifaceted crises that have significantly impacted its health, socio-political, and economic landscape. The country counts approximately 5.5 million inhabitants (1) including 2 million Syrian refugees, some 500,000 Palestinian refugees and some 11,200 refugees of other nationalities (2). Currently, more than half of the Lebanese population is estimated to live below the poverty line, while 9 out of 10 Syrian refugees require humanitarian assistance to meet their basic needs (2). In addition, since October 8th, 2023, the ongoing escalation of hostilities in South Lebanon caused the displacement of nearly 94,000 people (3).

The large displacement of the population and repeated infectious disease outbreaks in the region, along with the economic situation which greatly impacted the healthcare system. Lebanon is at increased threat of communicable disease outbreaks, and the introduction of zoonotic infections previously not endemic. These multilayer crises have led to a decrease in immunization coverage, putting the country at risk of outbreaks of vaccine-preventable diseases like measles. The deterioration of the infrastructure and decrease in water, sanitation and hygiene activities increase the risk of outbreaks, including cholera and



The Global Outbreak Alert and Response Network (GOARN) requested assistance of a field epidemiologist at the WHO Country Office Lebanon to support data collection, analysis and

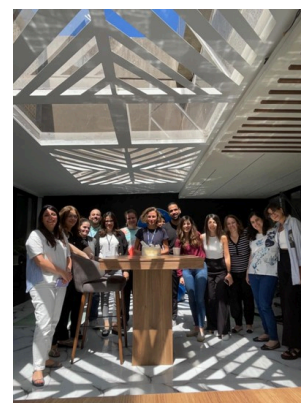


reporting of infectious diseases for public health action purposes, while maintaining close and operational linkages with key partner organizations active in response. Moreover, my role in this deployment involved a brief assessment of the current surveillance structures in place, and the consolidation of data tools, forms and flow of information, followed by a review of the current list of priority diseases in Lebanon with its classifications, reporting frequencies and the corresponding information sources. Together with my colleague Dr. Christine Azar, I conducted a field visit in Tripoli as part of the brief assessment. During our trip, we visited a private hospital, a primary healthcare center, and a private laboratory (see photo 1, 2 and 3, respectively).

My six weeks in Lebanon flew by. I was happy to make a small contribution to the great work by the WHO Lebanon Country Office. It was a privilege to work with highly motivated and committed colleagues at the Ministry of Public Health and WHO, and I would like to thank them all!

## References

- 1.The World Bank. Databank. Population, total - Lebanon (most recent year 2022). Accessed on April 26, 2024.
- 2.UNHCR Lebanon. Needs at a Glance (2024). Accessed on April 26, 2024.
- 3.United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). Lebanon: Flash Update #18 - Escalation of hostilities in south Lebanon, as of 17 May 2024.



## Pictures:

1. Field visit to the Haykel Hospital Tripoli. Head of the Infectious Disease department (middle), Epidemiological Surveillance Unit (ESU) officers in North Lebanon (first and second right), Dr. Christine Azar and Dr. Henrieke Prins from the WHO Lebanon CO (first and second left, respectively). Photo: Dr. Mona Yousseff, April 2024.
2. Field visit to the Azm and Saade/Zehrieh primary healthcare center. Coordinating nurse and surveillance focal point (right), Dr. Christine Azar and Dr. Henrieke Prins from the WHO Lebanon CO (first and second left, respectively). Photo: Joelle Bassila, April 2024.
3. Field visit to the Middle East Medical Lab Tripoli. Director of the laboratory (right), Dr. Christine Azar and Dr. Henrieke Prins from the WHO Lebanon CO (first and second left, respectively). Photo: Joelle Bassila, April 2024.
4. Colleagues at the WHO Lebanon Country Office. Photo: Henrieke Prins, May 2024.

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## connected!

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### Do what you love to do!

You'd like to get active on a project for our community? An experience you'd like to share or a topic you'd like to educate on? Please reach out to us at [eanboard@gmail.com](mailto:eanboard@gmail.com) if you'd like to discuss your idea and want our support. We are available to help you bringing your ideas come to life.

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### Support us with mini-assignments

Our community lives from all of us and the capacities of the board alone are limited. Every now and then, we may reach out to ask for your help on specific tasks or activities to get the best out of it for all of us.

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### Activate your membership

Many benefits are lined up for active members of the network (GOARN requests of assistance, bulletins, discounts on mini-modules, access to specific ressources on our website...).

Membership runs from Nov. 1 until Oct 31 of the following year - but you can activate your membership at anytime! **The annual membership fee is now €30 / £28. There is a 10-year membership available at €250 / £230.**

Fellows in their first and second year of training are exempt from paying membership fees. We have added a new payment option for credit cards to make membership renewal a bit easier. To use this option, please go to our website and follow the instructions there.

The details for how to transfer fees by online banking are also on the [EAN webpage](#); if you require any further information on membership payment, we kindly ask you to contact the EAN board ([eanboard@gmail.com](mailto:eanboard@gmail.com)), putting "membership payment" in the subject line.

Please indicate your name and membership year as reference in the bank transfer and also send an email to [eanboard@gmail.com](mailto:eanboard@gmail.com) with a copy of the receipt/invoice to inform us about your payment (sometimes names are not correctly transmitted with the transfer). Thank you for your support!

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