



## Measles on board Icelandair airplanes

The Canadian health authorities confirmed on the 7th of June this year, in accordance with the WHO International Health Regulations, that a person with infectious measles had been on board two Icelandair airplanes on the 30th of May 2018 en route from Berlin to Iceland and from Iceland to Toronto (FI529 and FI603). A 22-year-old woman, travelling from Kiev entered the two Icelandair airplanes during her infectious period. The fol-

lowing day after arriving in Canada, she became ill with symptoms of measles. Icelandair, in collaboration with the Chief Epidemiologist, sent the necessary information and instructions to all passengers of the above-mentioned aircrafts. In these guidelines, passengers were encouraged to seek medical advice until the 20th of June if they developed symptoms that might indicate measles, especially if they were unvaccinated. Symptoms of measles usually occur 10

to 14 days after exposure to measles but the time period can extend up to 21 days. No secondary cases of measles have been reported among the passengers.



Picture: Icelandair

## Is there a risk of measles epidemics in Iceland?

In recent years Icelanders have occasionally been exposed to measles abroad and on airplanes. Up until now, however, herd immunity due to vaccination has prevented it from spreading within the country. The Chief Epidemiologist closely monitors the vaccination coverage of children in Iceland vaccinated with the triple vaccine measles, rubella and mumps (MMR). As shown in Figure 1, the MMR vaccination coverage decreased in 2015, which is a matter of. Even though the vaccination coverage in Ice-

*Cont. p. 2*

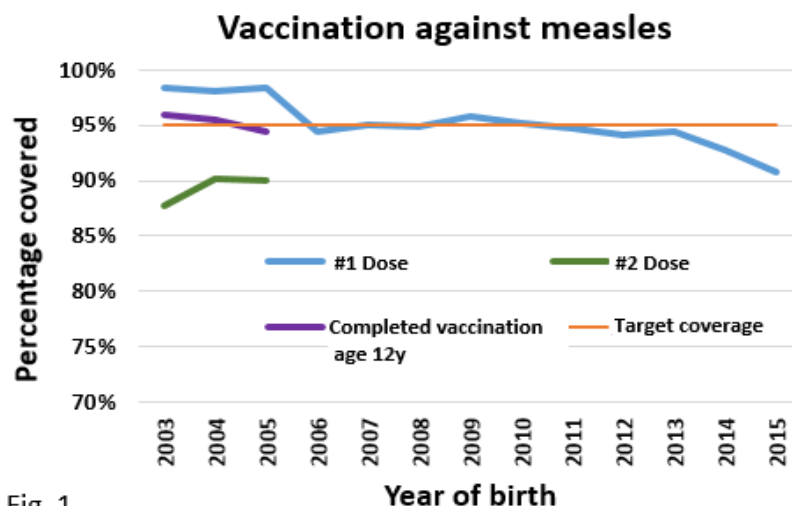


Fig. 1

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land appears to be suboptimal, it in all likelihood is higher due to evidence of registration failures at health centers in some instances.

## New Regulation on the treatment and transfer of cadavers

A new Regulation, No. 618/2018, on the treatment and transport of cadavers, was signed by the Minister of Health on the 30th of May this year. It replaces an almost half-a-century-old Regulation on the same subject. The objective of the Regulation is to prevent the spread of communicable diseases, toxic and radioactive substances from cadavers. The Chief Epidemiologist has published guidelines on procedures for the treatment and transfer of cadavers in accordance with the Regulation.

## Salmonella outbreak in an Icelandic cargo ship

All crew members of an Icelandic cargo ship (11 individuals) fell ill with gastroenteritis after the ship left the Netherlands in May this year heading for Iceland. The crew members became ill one by one until the ship reached its destination in Iceland. Two were hospitalised. The causative agent, *Salmonella typhimurium*, was isolated from seven of crew members but culture was not obtained from four. The investigation was conducted in collaboration with the Reykjavik Health Inspectorate, the Food and Veterinary Authority, Matís, the Department of Microbiology at the Landspítali University Hospital and the heads of the shipping company.

Epidemiological investigation revealed that the food-borne infection originated on board the ship, most likely from food supplies bought in the Netherlands. *Salmonella typhimurium* was cultured from several food items onboard the ship. The European Center for Disease Control and Prevention and the European Food Safety Authority were notified. A further study of the genome of the salmonella was conducted in collaboration with the Dutch health authorities. The result showed that this strain was not associated with similar *S. typhimurium* strains that have been detected in Europe or Iceland recently.



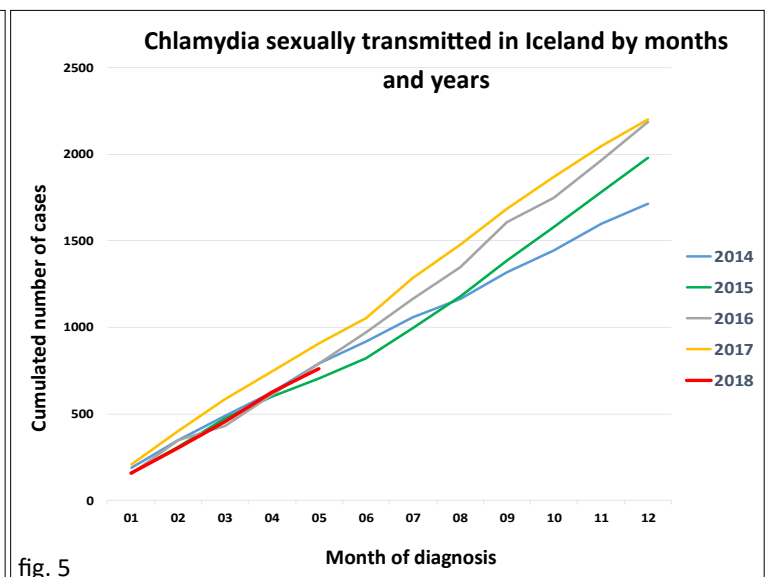
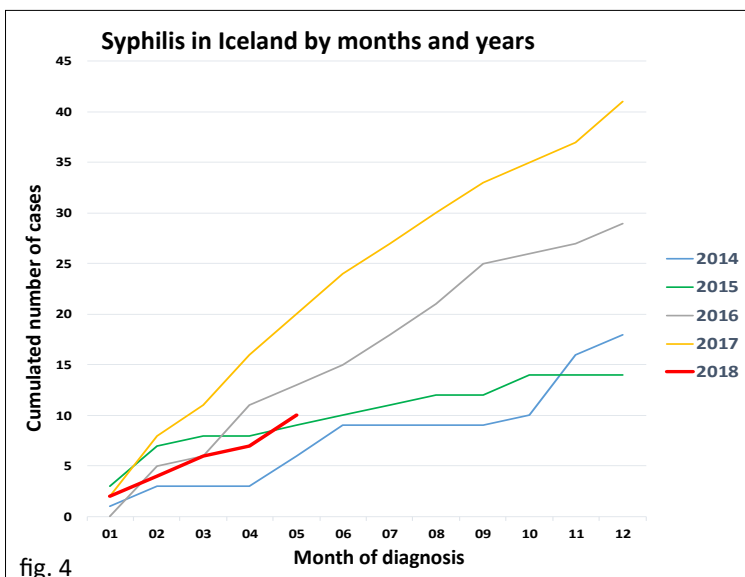
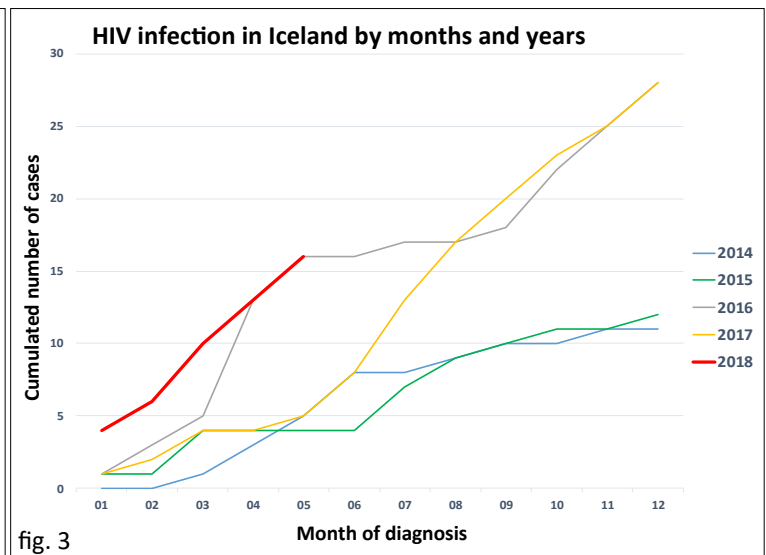
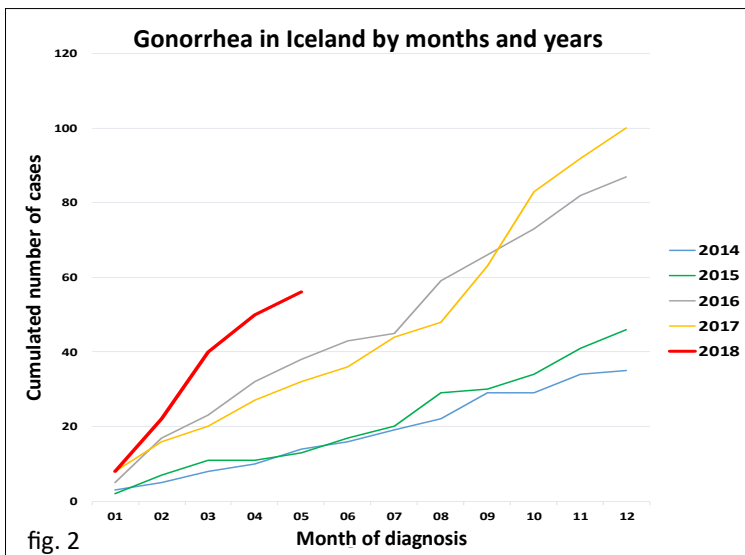
Picture: WHO (is not related to the news)

## Sexually transmitted diseases

The number of cases with sexually transmitted diseases during the first five months of 2018 has continued to increase, particularly gonorrhoea and HIV. Of the 55 individuals diagnosed with gonorrhoea during the first five months, 51 were men (93%) and most of them were men who have sex with

men (MSM). Thirty four (62%) of the individuals were Icelandic citizens. Of the 16 individuals diagnosed with HIV infection, 13 were foreigners. One individual with known HIV infection, who had not taken anti-HIV drugs as instructed, was diagnosed with AIDS. So far this year, fewer were diagnosed with

syphilis than during the last two years. No change was observed in the number of cases with chlamydia, which is the most common sexually transmitted disease in Iceland.



## Measures against the spread of sexually transmitted diseases

As reported in [Epi-Ice in April 2018](#), official measures have been initiated in order to limit the spread of sexually transmitted diseases in Iceland in accordance with recommendations earlier this year made by a working group.

At this time it is not clear when all of the recommendations will be implemented.



## Measures against antimicrobial resistance

In the [January 2018 issue of Epi-Ice](#) this year, official measures against antimicrobial resistance in Iceland were reported. The Ministry of Health has now decided to start working with other ministries in combatting the spread of antimicrobial resistance. One focus in the fight against antimicrobial resistance is to promote rational prescription of antibiotics for humans and animals. This work has already started by a joint effort by The Chief Epidemiologist, the primary health care and the Association of Icelandic Pediatricians. Hopefully, it will lead to reduced use of antibiotics in 2018.

