

Public Health Surveillance Functions in International Jurisdictions

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Introduction

This poster presents an overview of an international environmental scan aimed at describing characteristics of national public health surveillance functions from countries with contexts comparable to Canada. Conducted by the National Collaborating Centre for Methods and Tools (NCCMT) in collaboration with the National Collaborating Centre for Healthy Public Policy (NCCHPP), this study provides a global perspective on corporate surveillance system coordination at a national level.

Methods

Public documents and published literature were identified through an internet search conducted in August-September 2022. At least one key informant from each of Australia, Denmark, Israel, New Zealand, Norway, the United Kingdom, the United States and the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) was interviewed in October 2022 about the description of public health surveillance functions, relevant policies and strategic plans, governance structures and processes, monitoring and evaluation, internal engagement structures and processes, and approaches to knowledge synthesis. Key points and themes to describe public health surveillance characteristics were synthesized across countries/ECDC.

Results and Analysis

General description of public health surveillance systems

Surveillance structures and functions vary significantly, with larger countries and the EU demonstrating decentralized models and smaller countries operating more nationally centralized systems.

Policies and strategic plans

High-level legislation governs public health functions, including surveillance, with most countries having strategic plans or objectives primarily focused on communicable diseases.

Governance organizational structures and processes

The national Ministry of Health or equivalent body typically provides oversight, with various agencies or institutes responsible for operational and coordination functions.

Surveillance performance monitoring and evaluation

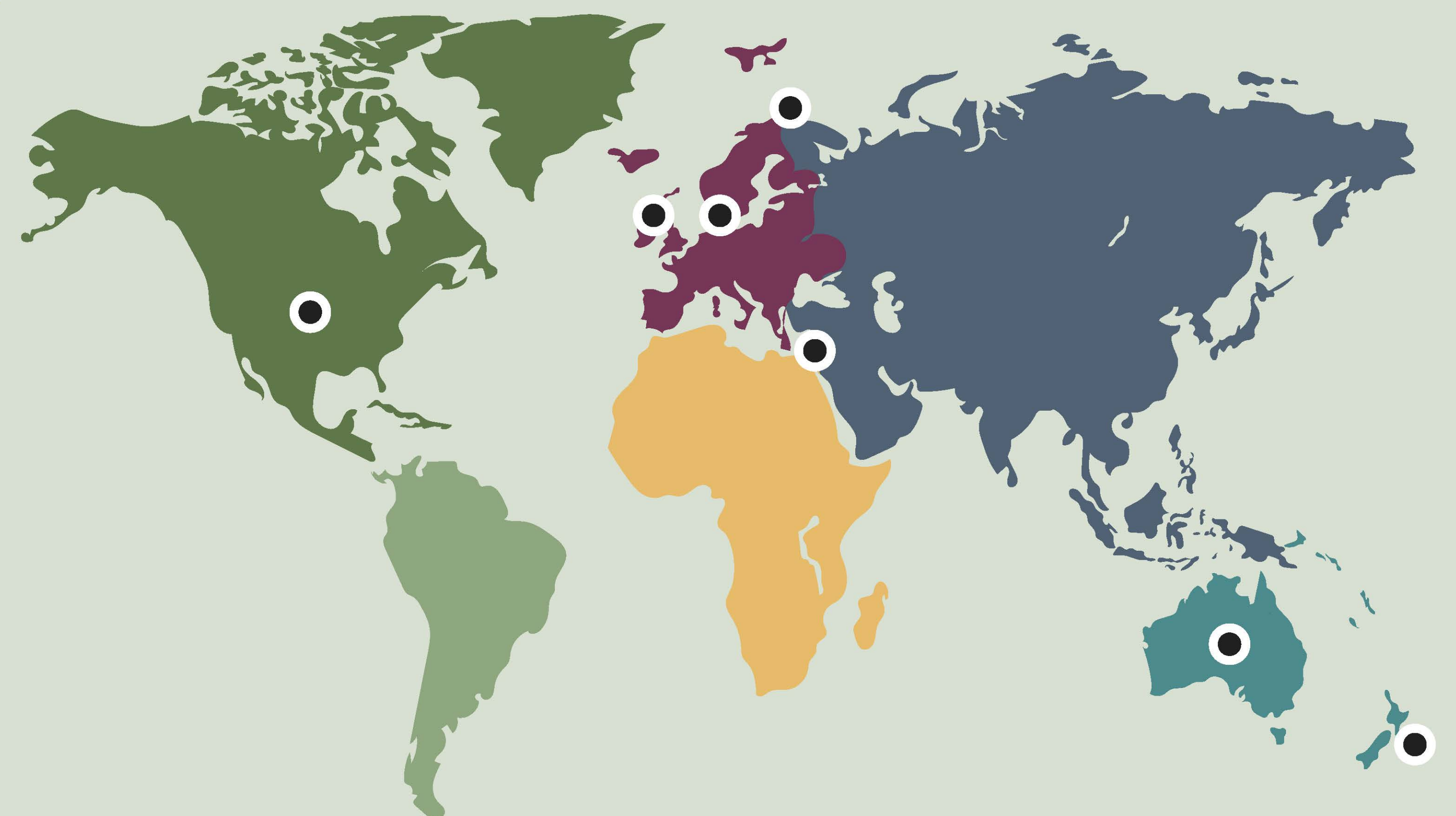
Surveillance system evaluations are often ad-hoc, with some countries developing minimum standards for system performance.

Internal engagement structures and processes

Effective internal communication is facilitated through structured networks, working groups, and in some cases, communities of practice.

Knowledge synthesis

Efforts to synthesize surveillance data into actionable knowledge vary, with some countries utilizing dashboards and comprehensive reports to inform decision-making.



Conclusions and Implications for Policy, Practice or Additional Research

- Public health surveillance is a well-established function globally, with enabling legislation and dedicated structures across the countries studied. Despite variances in centralization and operational details, there is a common emphasis on infectious disease surveillance, driven in part by the COVID-19 pandemic's impact. Ongoing efforts to innovate, evaluate, and synthesize surveillance data highlight the dynamic nature of public health surveillance and the shared goal of improving public health outcomes.
- Given the evaluation focus on specific segments of surveillance systems, little can be concluded at a high level about how effectively public health surveillance systems are working as a whole.
- Less is known about non-communicable disease surveillance, environmental surveillance, or how determinants of health and health equity factor into countries' plans for public health surveillance.
- Future priorities of interest include systems that draw from existing and real-time data, expanded digitalization, and increased opportunities for knowledge exchange.

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