

ANSWERS TO ESTIMATES QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

HEALTH AND AGEING PORTFOLIO

Supplementary Budget Estimates 2010-2011, 20 October 2010

Question: E10-024

OUTCOME 1: Population Health

Topic: FOOD REACTIONS

Written Question on Notice

Senator Siewert asked:

- a) Is the Department aware that Australian hospital separation rates for severe food anaphylaxis and adverse food reaction have increased dramatically across all age groups?
- b) Has the Department considered that this may be related to the introduction of GM food ingredients and contamination through global trade lines?
- c) Is the Department aware that FSANZ declared that the post-market follow up to the safety of these products be left in the hands of the GM crop developers themselves?
- d) Do you consider it appropriate to leave the post-market follow-up to the commercial company of financial interest?

Answer:

- a) The Healthcare Services Information Branch within the Department of Health and Ageing has provided the following information:

The following tables aim to inform the question. As the source of this information is unknown, definitions of disease categories and age groups may differ. The information in the tables includes hospital separations with any of the following ICD-10-AM diagnosis codes reported (principal or secondary diagnoses):

- (i) T78.0 Anaphylactic shock due to adverse food reaction
- (ii) T78.1 Other adverse food reactions, not elsewhere classified
- (iii) T78.3 Angioneurotic oedema

Separations for which the care type was reported as Newborn with no qualified days, and records for Hospital boarders and Posthumous organ procurement have been excluded. Population figures based on estimated resident population in December of the relevant year.

## Hospital separations and separation rates for severe food anaphylaxis and adverse food reaction, Australia, 2004-05 to 2008-09

Source: National Admitted Patient Care nmds, 2004-05 to 2008-09

| <b>Number of separations</b> |                |                |                |                |                |
|------------------------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| <b>Age group</b>             | <b>2004-05</b> | <b>2005-06</b> | <b>2006-07</b> | <b>2007-08</b> | <b>2008-09</b> |
| 0-4                          | 475            | 665            | 735            | 751            | 859            |
| 5-14                         | 331            | 450            | 440            | 541            | 610            |
| 15-39                        | 1,025          | 1,249          | 1,288          | 1,316          | 1,357          |
| 40-64                        | 902            | 1,104          | 1,079          | 1,173          | 1,174          |
| 65+                          | 798            | 759            | 856            | 864            | 915            |
| total                        | 3,531          | 4,227          | 4,398          | 4,645          | 4,915          |

| <b>Separations per 100,000 population (crude rates)</b> |                |                |                |                |                |
|---|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| <b>Age group</b>  | <b>2004-05</b> | <b>2005-06</b> | <b>2006-07</b> | <b>2007-08</b> | <b>2008-09</b> |
| 0-4   | 37.1           | 51.1           | 55.7           | 55.8           | 61.0           |
| 5-14  | 12.1           | 16.4           | 16.1           | 19.7           | 22.2           |
| 15-39   | 14.3           | 17.2           | 17.5           | 17.6           | 17.8           |
| 40-64   | 13.9           | 16.7           | 16.1           | 17.2           | 16.9           |
| 65+   | 30.7           | 28.6           | 31.5           | 31.0           | 31.9           |
| total   | 17.4           | 20.6           | 21.1           | 21.9           | 22.7           |

- b) The Department is aware of claims that Genetically Modified (GM) foods could be connected with an increase in the incidence of allergies however considers that these claims are not supported by robust scientific or medical evidence.
- c) Where the pre-market safety assessment fails to identify any food safety concerns, the Department supports the view that post-market monitoring of approved GM foods is unnecessary. The risks associated with a particular food are the same whether it has been produced from an approved GM or non-GM crop. Once approved, the use of any GM food is a commercial decision taken by the food industry and carries with it the usual set of responsibilities to comply with national and state and territory food laws.
- d) See c).