



PRESS STATEMENT

IMR19/12

PNG MEDICAL SYMPOSIUM 20125 September 2012

AVIAN INFLUENZA:CHECKING ITS PATH IN PNG

Avian influenza (HPAI) A subtype has been devastating domestic poultry populations in Asia, Europe and Africa since 2002. To guard against potential threats to Papua New Guinea, the PNG Institute of Medical Research (IMR) is studying the locations, frequency and strains of avian influenza here.

Marinjho Jonduo is working on the study with IMR in Goroka as part of her University of PNG Honours program.

“Our teams collected samples from 13 locations across different geographical areas in PNG, looking at three biosecurity settings for exposure of poultry to wild birds,” Ms Jonduo.

“A high setting indicates poultry have little or no exposure to wild birds, while low means frequent exposure,” she said.

“This wide range of sites tells us about the distribution of avian influenza viruses and will help us work out which strains of avian influenza are present here.

“Animal and human health authorities will use this data for prevention and control of this disease that kills poultry and severely reduces the income of poultry farmers,” she said.

“Avian influenza (HPAI) A subtype is highly infectious. It has a very high death rate among infected domesticated poultry and could cause a pandemic if humans could easily transmit it to each other,” Ms Jonduo said.

Waterfowls are natural reservoirs for influenza A viruses. Infected birds rarely show symptoms and can infect other birds by contaminating shared feed or water or surfaces.

Sample swabs are taken from the middle part of the throat (oropharyngeal), posterior opening (cloacal) and from the blood (sera) of poultry. Samples are analysed at IMR in Goroka and at St Jude Children’s Research Hospital, Memphis, USA.

Symposium Paper: Molecular detection and characterization of avian influenza virus in Papua New Guinea (PNG) using universal primers.

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