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Food Inspection Evaluation Project

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Routine restaurant inspections are designed to prevent food-borne illness by ensuring safe food handling and preparation. This study sought to analyze the effectiveness of routine restaurant inspections in predicting food-borne outbreaks in New York State. Utilizing a case-crossover design, the data collected from the routine inspection conducted prior to the outbreak (cases; $n = 31$) was compared to results from two routine inspections prior to the case inspection report in the same restaurant (controls; $n = 62$). There were 31 food-borne outbreaks, which met the selection criteria for this study from 2000-2005. The etiology was confirmed in 15 (48.4%) outbreaks and the most frequently confirmed etiology was bacterial. Of the contributing factors that were identified, the most frequently cited were infected food worker implicated (20%) and improper cooling (16.7%). The most critical violations was "improper cooling and refrigerated storage of potentially hazardous food" group (40.9%) and the most establishment sanitation, design and maintenance violation was "food not protected in general" group (29.8%). Cases are more likely to have critical violations when compared to controls (OR=1.8, 95% CI=0.5,4.85). Also cases are more likely to have establishment sanitation, design and maintenance violations when compared to controls (OR=1.7, 95% CI=0.59,4.85). However these results are not statistically significant. The limitation in this study such as small number of cases and insignificant results do not allow us to determine if routine inspection reports can predict an outbreak.