

Better methods and estimates of infectious disease burden

April 17 2012

Better estimates of infectious disease burden are needed for effective planning and prioritizing of limited public health resources. These are the conclusions of a new Policy Forum article in this week's *PLoS Medicine*, in which Mirjam Kretzschmar from the Centre for Infectious Disease Control, RIVM in Bilthoven, The Netherlands and colleagues describe the Burden of Communicable Diseases in Europe (BCoDE) study that uses a pathogen-based incidence approach to generate infectious disease burden estimates in Europe taking into full account all chronic and long-term sequelae that can be causally related to an infectious agent.

The authors found that this methodology has the advantage of consistently attributing the burden to its infectious cause. Although the approach also has some limitations—for example, many pathogens cause broad, nonspecific disease syndromes and it is difficult to attribute morbidity to a specific pathogen.

The researchers say that the study's findings show the need for further research in this area and that future challenges include the integration of demographic changes and infection dynamics into the methodology for estimating the burden of IDs.

More information: Kretzschmar M, Mangen M-JJ, Pinheiro P, Jahn B, Fe`vre EM, et al. (2012) New Methodology for Estimating the Burden of Infectious Diseases in Europe. *PLoS Med* 9(4): e1001205.
[doi:10.1371/journal.pmed.1001205](https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pmed.1001205)

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