

REPORTING A BREACH OF THE CODE OF PRACTICE FOR OFFICIAL STATISTICS

1. Core Information

Title and link to statistical output	Mefloquine Prescribing in the UK Armed Forces https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/mefloquine-lariam-prescribing-in-the-uk-armed-forces-12-september-2016-to-30-september-2017
Name of statistical producer	Defence Statistics Health, Ministry of Defence
Name and contact details of person dealing with report	Rachel Graham Email: Rachel.Graham910@mod.gov.uk Phone: 0306 7984467
Link to published statement about the breach (if relevant)	
Date of report	17/11/2017

2. Circumstances of breach

Relevant principle/protocol and practice	Protocol 2 – Practice 7
Date of occurrence of breach	15/11/2017
<i>Give an account of what has happened including roles of persons involved, dates, times etc</i>	
<p>A member of the MOD Medical Policy Team received pre-release access for the Official Statistic on mefloquine prescribing in the UK Armed Forces at 9.30am on Wednesday 15 November 2017. These statistics were due to be published on the Gov.uk website at 9.30am on 16 November.</p> <p>The pre-release version of the official statistic was sent with a covering email which stated <i>“You must not forward or otherwise disclose their contents to anyone who is not on the list before 9:30 am on 16 November 2017. Such disclosure constitutes a breach of the Official Statistics protocols for which the Department is held to account by the UK Statistics Authority”</i> and <i>“Not for sharing with anyone else or to be used in other documents before publication. If you think you need to discuss and share with anyone not on the circulation list first contact Paula Fredersdorff (Def Strat-Econ-ESES-DEA-Hd).”</i></p> <p>At 16.53 on 15 November 2017 (pre-release day) this team member cited the release of the official statistic and the following numbers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the number and percentage of personnel with a coded record of a risk assessment prior to a prescription of mefloquine • the number and percentage of personnel who had a coded record of an alternative drug to mefloquine offered as part of that consultation <p>These details of figures were forwarded onto two members of the Defence Primary Healthcare clinical delivery team and to two multiuser Surgeon General Policy multiuser accounts, all within the MOD.</p> <p>This email was sent in response to two parliamentary questions that required input by 10am 16 November 2017. Although input was not required until after the official statistic was released, it was provided the previous evening because the person providing the input was out of office on 16 November 2017.</p> <p>Therefore as the information was provided for the PQ before the release of the official statistic, the email should only have been shared with those individuals on the pre-release access list.</p>	

The email noted "the statistics quoted are embargoed until 0930 tomorrow" so addressees were aware that the numbers/percentages could not be released externally. Confusion appears to have arisen with the sharing of these numbers with internal employees.

Defence Statistics became aware of this until 16 November at 10.09 when we were subsequently forwarded this email so we could confirm we were content with the drafted response of the PQ.

3. Impact of the breach

Provide details of the impact of the breach both inside the producer body and externally

The statistics were provided to MOD internal personnel only – roles detailed above.

The PQ for which the statistics were provided was not responded to until after the statistics were published and therefore no external release happened prior to the official stat publication.

Although the official statistic is not market sensitive there has been a large amount of interest from the public and media following the release of the HCDC enquiry into mefloquine prescribing in the UK Armed Forces.

4. Corrective actions (taken or planned) to prevent re-occurrence

Describe the short-term actions made to redress the situation and the longer term changes to procedures etc

As Defence Statistics Health were not aware of the breach until after the planned release time of 9.30 16 November 2017, it was not appropriate to recall the statistics.

The instructions accompanying the pre-release email (see section 2) appear clear and non-ambiguous so no corrective actions associated with these instructions was necessary.

We will be issuing an email to all people on pre-release reminding them of the correct release procedures and what to do/who to contact should they wish to quote the numbers prior to the planned release time. We will emphasise that these restrictions apply to internal stakeholders as well as external release.

Defence Statistics have spoken to the person responsible for the breach to explain why this circumstance was a breach. We have also asked the person responsible for a statement of why the statistics were passed on to people not on the pre-release access list. This will enable us to gain a better understanding of why it happened and to ensure that further education of the release protocols is taken to prevent this particular instance happening again.