

Outbreak Investigation: Description of the Outbreak

Scenario

On Wednesday, June 5, a local community organization held a fundraising crab feast for cancer research. Roughly 50 people attended. The menu included fresh steamed crabs, macaroni salad, egg salad, and sandwiches.

On Thursday, June 6, a woman who had attended the crab feast woke up feeling ill. She scheduled an appointment with her doctor. She described her symptoms as nausea, fever, chills, and body aches. On Friday, June 7, the physician noted that during the morning of her shift, she had seen several people with similar symptoms. She began asking questions about their previous activities and found they had all attended the crab feast. The doctor called the local health department to report what she suspected was a **foodborne illness outbreak**.

Start of the Investigation

The health department immediately began an investigation. A district health officer contacted patients and confirmed the doctor's report of their illnesses as well as their attendance at the crab feast. The investigator suspected the crab feast might have been the source of the illnesses.

The health department also prepared a questionnaire, which was distributed a week after the crab feast to as many people as possible who had attended the event. The questionnaire asked for the following information:

- Whether the person became ill
- Symptoms of the illness
- Time the symptoms began
- What foods the person ate

Out of the 50 people who attended the event, 20 responded to the questionnaire. The results are given in **Outbreak Investigation: Questionnaire Data**. Each row represents a different person.