

## **Investigating the impact of SARS-CoV-2 infection on gastrointestinal infection surveillance/trends. Understanding the epidemiology of travel associated GI infections.**

Every year a third of people visiting a doctor in England with a sickness and diarrhoea bug have become ill after travelling abroad. Many of these bugs can be very serious and people may have to go to hospital or could even die. When a doctor diagnoses someone with a serious sickness and diarrhoea bug, the person is often asked to complete a survey. These surveys ask questions about what the person was doing and eating before they became unwell. This information is used by people working in public health to find out what caused someone to become unwell. It can also be used to suggest actions that can stop other people getting ill.

The surveys we currently use for serious sickness and diarrhoea bugs don't include many questions about things that people might have done while travelling. My work is looking at how we can collect better information from people who have travelled and then become unwell. If we have better information, we can prevent other people from becoming unwell in the future. For example, we can improve the advice we give to people who are going to certain countries. We can also work with the travel industry to make sure that travel is safer for people.

We developed a new survey together with a public group who help scientists make their research more accessible. This survey was designed to collect information from people who were unwell and asked questions about what symptoms they had, where they had travelled, what they had eaten and what activities they had done. It also asked about any healthcare or treatments they might have received for their illness. The survey was designed so that people who had been ill could complete it online by themselves.

In September 2022, the survey was sent by text message to a small number of people living in North East England who had been diagnosed with a serious sickness and diarrhoea bug. We did this to see whether people were willing and able to complete the survey. We also included questions that asked people what they thought about the survey. We found that people were happy to complete the survey and understood why we were collecting information from them.

We now plan on sending this questionnaire out to all people with serious sickness and diarrhoea bugs in the summer of 2023 when the highest number of people are travelling abroad. We will use the information collected to produce a report looking at common reasons why people are getting ill while travelling. A summary of this report will be available on a public website that we have for this project together with advice for safer travel.