



FOCUS on Field Epidemiology

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS: SELECTING A STUDY DESIGN

1. Have you ever used a cohort study design when conducting an outbreak investigation? Why or why not? Are there instances in which you think a cohort study would have been a good design to use?

Discussion Cues: Think about the last time you used a cohort study design (if you have used one). Was the population easily defined? Were you able to contact everyone in the cohort (or at least attempt to do so)? The most common situations in which cohort study designs are used include church picnics and wedding receptions. These are easily identifiable cohorts, and the church directory or wedding guest list can provide you with the contact information for all of those in attendance.

2. When have case reports helped you identify an ongoing disease transmission situation?

Discussion Cues: Case reports are often the method by which we become aware of unusual occurrences of disease in the community. When multiple case reports indicate that cases have characteristics in common, this can begin to define the source population for the disease. For example, multiple case reports of homosexual men diagnosed with diseases that are usually opportunistic, such as pneumonia from *Pneumocystis carinii*, were the first indication of the AIDS epidemic. Case reports such as these may come from schools/parents, local physicians, or diagnostic laboratories.



UNC
SCHOOL OF
PUBLIC HEALTH

NORTH CAROLINA
CENTER FOR PUBLIC
HEALTH PREPAREDNESS