

Preparedness Matters: Healthcare Systems and Special Pathogens

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Introduction

- New York City remains at constant risk of receiving cases of hazardous infectious diseases from abroad.
- It is crucial that hospitals remain vigilant and up-to-date on preparedness practices in order to avoid outbreaks.

Objective of Internship

The purpose of this internship was to assist the NYC H+H System-wide Special Pathogens Program in preparing for and reacting to potential outbreaks on the level of management. Through this internship, we gained insight into pathogen spread, public hospital systems, and Emergency Management.

Work profile

- Gained first-hand experience working in the nation's largest municipal healthcare delivery system.
- Support the System-wide Special Pathogens Program activities within the department of Emergency Management.
- Design and carry out healthcare preparedness initiatives for special pathogen threats, including COVID-19 vaccine initiatives.

Reflection

- The day and age within which we currently reside places pathogenic threats at the forefront of culture and conversation. As a world, we need to build on this momentum to inspire better preparedness against future threats.
- Our recommendation for hospital systems globally is to go beyond solely honing protocol to work on *behavioral* preparedness, planning for the very human endeavor of responding to a high-risk threat.



Photographer: Dr. Richard Salway.
Featured: Sarah Brown and the NYFD

- Effective communication campaigns with both the general public and health care workers remains one of the most pressing challenges of Emergency Management.



Photographer: Inga Furuness
Featured: Saoirse Bodnar assisted by healthcare professionals at Lincoln Hospital

- In June 2021, NYC H+H's System-wide Special Pathogens Program conducted a large scale drill to test hospitals' Ebola virus disease (EVD) preparedness.
- This drill demonstrated the importance of practice for pathogen preparedness.
- Communication between healthcare providers was essential.

Looking ahead

- Protocol and guidelines developed this summer will be implemented in the event of a pathogenic emergency
- Summer 2021 interns continue to work on a publication on preparedness

Questions

- How can preparedness initiatives be continuously optimized for human behavior (nerves, panic, arrogance, etc.) to ensure a successful healthcare response?
- Within the context of repeated time-sensitive emergencies, how can we still get hospital systems to devote resources to abstract threats?

Conclusion

Preparedness requires continuous maintenance, meaning that, as a healthcare system, country, and world, we must remain attentive and detail oriented. In order to do this, we must embrace the intrinsic imperfection that characterizes human nature to strengthen our response to the next special pathogen, ultimately to keep our communities safe and healthy.

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