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Biorisk Management During a Zoonotic Disease Outbreak: Multi-Stakeholder Tabletop Exercise

Background

The ability to detect disease outbreaks, whether they are naturally occurring orman-made, is important for public health, safety, and security. Early and accurate detection of an infectious disease outbreak can facilitate a more effective response to the outbreak. The collection and analysis of clinical and environmental samples play an important role in the detection and characterization of infectious disease outbreaks. However, the manipulation of samples inside and outside the laboratory may pose biosafety and biosecurity risks.

On behalf of the U.S. Department of State's Biosecurity Engagement Program (BEP), Sandia National Laboratories' International Biological Threat Reduction (IBTR) department is organizinga zoonotic disease outbreak tabletop exercise. This exercise will feature Algerian human and veterinary health representatives from diagnostic and research laboratories, disease surveillance (epidemiology), and policy makers; and discussion facilitators from the US. Using a fictitious zoonotic disease outbreak scenario, the exercise participants will work through a facilitated process to understand Algeria's plans and procedures for detection and notification related to causative agents of zoonotic disease Key areas of focus will be collection, transport, intake, laboratory analysis, and disposition of clinical specimens and reporting of associated data, with an emphasis on policies and procedures related to biosafety and biosecurity. The ultimate goal of the exercise is to identify and characterizesystem strengths, weaknesses, gaps and opportunities to improve current practices and procedures related to the detection, laboratory confirmation, and reporting of suspected zoonotic disease outbreaks. The event will utilize fictitious infectious disease outbreak scenarios as a means to exploring:

- Biorisk management across public and animal health systems as it pertains to specimen collection through destruction
- Communication between human and veterinary health sectors to enhance One-Health policies and practices, to include capabilities and gaps in reporting disease related information
- Regulatory environment and enabling laws and policies to support disease reporting by both public and private sectors of human and animal health

This event is intended for mid to senior level management/leadership personnel who routinely engage in public health and zoonotic disease surveillance and outbreak response activities. This includes representatives from major public health and veterinary laboratories (central and provincial), research organizations, personnel from sentinel surveillance sites, field veterinarians, clinical infectious disease specialists, and epidemiologists responsible for zoonotic disease surveillance and policy development of

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control measures and national response strategies, including implementation of the International Health Regulations (2005).

This event will be an opportunity to identify areas for potential future collaborations to enhance zoonotic disease detection and initial response (notification) capacity while minimizing associated biological risks. Open and honest communication is essential to the success of the event and identification of potential future engagements.

Tabletop Exercise Objectives

Overall exercise objectives are provided below.

1. Identify roles and responsibilities of key stakeholders based on Algeria's current national disease detection and reporting plans.
2. Identify current capabilities and barriers to detection and reporting of a suspected incidence of human infection with a zoonotic disease, concurrent with detection and reporting of a suspected outbreak in the animal population.
3. Characterize and identify strengths, weaknesses, gaps and opportunities to improve current practices and procedures for sample collection, transport, intake, laboratory analysis, disposition, and reporting of test results, with an emphasis on analyzing biosafety and biosecurity risk assessment and mitigation measures taken during each sample processing step.

Overview of Agenda

The duration of the exercise is three days, not including travel days. A detailed agenda will be provided in advance of the tabletop exercise. Each day of the event will begin at approximately 8:00am and discussions will occur until 5:00pm with lunch and tea breaks. An evening business dinner will be held on the second day. Event attire will be business casual and a group photograph will be taken during the evening business dinner.

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