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LESSON LEARNED

Hospital Preparedness: Multidisciplinary Pandemic Influenza Planning

SUMMARY

Hospitals' planning processes for pandemic preparedness should incorporate multiple disciplines, including such departments as materials management, security, occupational health, and other relevant departments or disciplines.

DESCRIPTION

On September 14, 2006, members of the San Francisco Department of Public Health, the San Francisco Infection Control Working Group, and the San Francisco Hospital Council Emergency Preparedness Taskforce hosted a 4-hour tabletop exercise (TTX). All nine hospitals in San Francisco as well as the Seton Medical Center of San Mateo County participated in the TTX. The TTX focused on hospitals' responses to three scenarios:

- A rule-out H5N1 avian influenza case during a World Health Organization (WHO) Pandemic Alert Phase 3 (no or very limited human-to-human transmission);
- A confirmed H5N1 case in San Francisco during a WHO Pandemic Alert Phase 4 (evidence of increased human-to-human transmission); and
- Widespread H5N3 influenza cases in San Francisco during a WHO Pandemic Alert Phase 6 (efficient and sustained human-to-human transmission) with hospital supply and staffing shortages.

The main goal of this TTX was to practice coordination and communication activities in a pandemic influenza scenario among hospital infection control professionals, hospital emergency preparedness coordinators, and sections of the San Francisco Department of Public Health. One objective was to improve communication between emergency preparedness coordinators and infection control professionals. Participants also sought to identify thresholds that would trigger an emergency response activation or a change in infection control standards.

The TTX participants considered their plans to be adequate but identified a number of ways to expand and improve them. Participants identified various departments that should be incorporated into pandemic influenza preparedness planning:

- Employee health (regarding staff responsibilities, communication, and clearance);
- Union representation;
- Occupational safety;
- Environmental health and safety;
- Mental and behavioral health;
- Regional offices;
- Emergency Departments; and
- Materials management.

This TTX was a useful tool for hospitals to start these multidisciplinary discussions, and many plan on adapting it for use within their own hospitals.

Hospitals' pandemic influenza planning should incorporate multiple disciplines, including healthcare, materials management, security, occupational health, and other relevant departments or disciplines.

CITATION

San Francisco Department of Public Health, San Francisco Infection Control Working Group and the Hospital Council Emergency Preparedness Taskforce. *2006 Pandemic Influenza Infection Control Tabletop Exercise After Action Report*. 14 Sep 2006.

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