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LESSON LEARNED

Biological Terrorism: Streamlining Processing for Mass Antibiotic Prophylaxis

SUMMARY

The process for screening patients and distributing antibiotic prophylaxis during a biological terrorist incident requires streamlining. Electronic registration and medical charts designed specifically for prophylaxis distribution can save time, preserve relevant information, and reduce confusion.

DESCRIPTION

The New York City Office of Emergency Management and the New York City Department of Health established six antibiotic points of distribution (PODs) to distribute prophylaxis during the 2001 anthrax exposure. Initially, the PODs registered patients in a handwritten logbook and acquired very detailed medical histories from each patient. These processes resulted in very long delays at the PODs.

These experiences led the PODs to redesign the patient registration and medical charts. The handwritten patient registration was replaced by a standardized electronic format, which enabled quick and accurate patient tracking.

The medical charts were simplified into a one page (two-sided), self-administered questionnaire that captured information relevant to antibiotic distribution. These revised medical charts included:

- Contact information;
- Signed consent form for testing and treatment;
- Brief medical history; and
- Places to document nasal swab collection, antibiotic dispensing status, and antibiotic lot numbers.

A separate medical chart with a similar format was designed for children.

These changes enabled the PODs to register patients and manage medical charts much more efficiently.

CITATION

Susan Blank, Linda C. Moskin, Jane R. Zucker. "An Ounce of Prevention Is a Ton of Work: Mass Antibiotic Prophylaxis for Anthrax, New York City, 2001." *Emerging Infectious*

Diseases. June 2003.
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