

**Module 8:
Emergency Public Health
Messages for Avian Influenza
and Pandemic Situations**

Learning Objectives

- **Adapt risk communication messages for use in outbreak situations**
- **Identify target audiences for avian influenza risk communication**
- **Identify authorities and partners with whom public health messages can be coordinated**

Session Outline

- **Define emergency risk communication**
- **Adapting messages for outbreak situations**
- **Targeting audiences with messages**
- **Coordinating your message with partners**
- **Group activity: developing messages**

Emergency Risk Communication Objectives

- **To provide accurate and timely information**
- **To inform the public of steps being taken during a crisis**
- **To provide stakeholders with risk information**

To prevent or contain an outbreak & minimize social and economic disruption

Emergency Risk Communication

- **Emergency Communication**
 - Provide information about an unexpected crisis
 - *To explain how the crisis happened and what the audience should do*
- **Risk Communication**
 - Provide information about the potential outcome of a behavior or exposure and how to mediate risks
 - *To empower decision making*
- **Emergency Risk Communication** Combines the urgency of crisis communication with the need to communicate risks and benefits to target audiences
 - *Explain crisis and empower decision making*

Communication Plans & objective

- **Ministries of Health have developed avian influenza outbreak and pandemic communication plans**
- **Ministries of Health coordinate public messages with other agencies**
- **Communication objective: prevent or contain avian influenza and minimize social and economic disruption**

National Communication Plans

- **Integrate emergency and risk communication as part of domestic and regional pandemic preparedness planning**
- **Establish a multi- sectorial working group**
- **Develop effective partnerships with the media and other stakeholders for the exchange and dissemination of accurate and timely information**
- **Sensitize/train all partners about the appropriate preparedness plans and coordinate with appropriate partners to ensure a consistent message**

Pre-pandemic Communications Planning

- Anticipate information needs
- Develop messages *before* a pandemic
 - There will be demand for accurate, clear, concise, consistent, credible, and reliable information
 - Stakeholder information needs during a pandemic will only intensify (**To be more clarified**)

Considerations for Message Development

- Adapt risk communication messages for emergency situations
- Messages based on characteristics of the outbreak situation
- Choice of materials and channels used will depend upon communication infrastructure, population affected and resources available

Consider what you want people to do, know and feel!

Considerations for Message Development (cont.)

- **Consider economic and social feasibility of proposed interventions**
- **Cultural Sensitivity**
 - **Respect local beliefs and practices**
 - Culturally appropriate ways to address medical treatment
 - Food preparation related to poultry products
 - Common practices regarding fowl care
- **Use simple language**
- **Use graphics (must clearly demonstrate message being conveyed)**

MUST PRE-TEST MESSAGES WITH TARGET AUDIENCE!

Outbreak Investigation Messages

Base your message on the three components of descriptive epidemiology:

1. PERSON

- How many people are ill?**
- How many people have been exposed?**
- What are the gender, age, and occupation of those affected?**
- Are people affected or only birds?**
- Are the birds domestic or migratory?**

Outbreak Investigation Messages (cont.)

2. PLACE

- Where is the outbreak?**
- Is the site located near other population centers or geographic features?**
- Population characteristics?**
- What public health and health care facilities are available at the site?**
- Is there a cluster in a community or within a family?**

Outbreak Investigation Messages (cont.)

3. TIME

- Date first case identified?**
- Date last case(s) identified?**
- Presumed exposures and estimated incubation period?**
- How has the disease spread over time?**
- Is there anything like a community celebration or other gathering that could be related to exposure to infected persons or animals?**

Emergency Risk Communication Principles

- 1. Don't over-reassure**
- 2. Address existing concerns before providing updates**
- 3. Emphasize the process that is in place**
- 4. Don't try to allay panic**
- 5. Acknowledge people's fears**
- 6. Avoid mistakes or confusion**
- 7. Give people something to do!**

Emergency Risk Communication Principles (cont.)

- 1. Respond in a timely fashion**
- 2. Be accurate and consistent**
- 3. Be honest and transparent**
- 4. Show empathy**
- 5. Make yourself understood**
- 6. Take the local context into account**
- 7. Honor promises**

Credibility

The public's trust depends on its perception of your team's:

- Competence and expertise
- Authority and leadership
- Resource capacity
- Honesty and openness
- Dedication and commitment
- Empathy and caring

Cultural Sensitivity

- **Consider local customs and language**
- **Consider culturally appropriate ways to address medical examinations, specimen collection or other testing, treatment, and biopsy or autopsy**
- **Consider people in special categories**
 - **Children and mothers**
 - **Elderly and infirm**
 - **Workers**
 - **Respected members such as religious leaders**
 - **Families of patients**
 - **Grieving persons**

Identifying Authorities and Partners to Coordinate Public Health Messages

Domestic Partners

- **Other public health workers, at all levels**
- **Government and private care providers**
- **Police, military and other security**
- **Government and private media**
- **School authorities**
- **Veterinarians / other animal health workers**
- **Poultry / other livestock producers**
- **Zoos**

Potential Resources for Central Health Authorities

- **United Nations**
 - UNICEF
 - Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)
- **World Health Organization**
- **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention**
- **Other technical agencies and NGOs**

Consistent Messages

Many agencies must speak with one voice

- Establish good inter-agency communication prior to an outbreak
- Establish lines of command within a team
- Designate a spokesperson

Who is your audience?

Non-healthcare professionals

- Cases
- Close contacts
- Family members
- Neighbors
- Villagers
- Community leaders
- Media

Target Populations by Characteristics

Demographics

- Families with children

Exposed populations

- Raise poultry at home
- Participate in cock-fighting
- Cull poultry
- Work with sick or dead poultry

What are the criteria for choosing targets?

- Which targets are most vulnerable to or defenseless against the health problem?
- Which targets are most adversely affected by the health problem?
- Which targets segments are most unique and identifiable?
- Which targets can be most easily reached and influenced?
- Which targets are large enough to justify intervention?
- Which targets are most likely to change contributing factors associated with the problem?
- Which targets represent the highest priority for your agency?

Communication Strategies

- Briefings
- Flyers
- Fact sheets
- Public meetings
- Small meetings or focus groups
- Face-to-face individual contact
- Telephone contact

Communication Challenges

- **Convincing people about the potential magnitude of the problem**
- **Targeting hard to reach populations**
- **Communicating with minority groups**
- **Promoting measures that do not impact on economic livelihoods and are culturally acceptable**
- **Coordinating information with neighboring countries, particularly in border areas**

Facing and curbing rumors

- **Face the rumor and do not neglect it**
- **Provide the scientific points of view**
- **Involve the concerned experts and decision makers**

EMRO AI campaign

- **A/V animated spots**
- **Posters**
- **Flyers**

Closing remarks

- **Communications is strategic**
 - relates to target needs
 - based on stated goals and objectives of “The Plan”
 - systematically developed & monitored
 - Firmly rooted in social science
- **Successful ERC is consistent, accurate and timely**
- **Coordinated across federal, state and local levels**

Summary

- **Risk communication involves giving the public accurate and timely information about a threat or risk**
- **Many countries have risk communication plans already developed**
- **Consider the best way to reach different target populations before an emergency occurs**

Questions?

Glossary

Credibility

The quality of being believable or trustworthy.

Cultural sensitivity

Having a defined set of principles and policies that enable public health agencies and health care providers to work effectively cross-culturally. By adapting to diversity and the cultural contexts of the communities they serve, agencies and providers design and implement services that are tailored to the unique needs of individuals, children, families, and other organizations.

Glossary

Focus groups

A moderator-lead discussion among a small group of people within a study or target population to discuss people's perceptions, experiences, and feelings related to one or more issues. Feedback obtained in focus groups can be applied to public health program planning and implementation.

Risk communication

When public health officials, medical experts, or government authorities provide information to allow an individual or community to make the best possible decisions.

References and Resources

- WHO, Effective Media Communication During Public Health Emergencies
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<http://www.wpro.who.int/NR/rdonlyres/04FA6993-8CD1-4B72-ACB9-EB0EBD3D0CB1/0/Advice10022004rev08112004.pdf> (November 8, 2004)

References and Resources

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- Emerging Infectious Disease (2006) Avian Influenza Risk Communication, Thailand www.cdc.gov/eid (July 2006) p. 1172-73.
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