CERC in an Infectious Disease Outbreak

Print Resources Web Page: https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/communication/print-resources.html?Sort=Date%3A%3Adesc&Page=2

1. **Be First:** Quickly sharing information about a disease outbreak can help stop the spread of disease, and prevent and reduce illness and even death. People often remember the first information they hear in an emergency, so the first information they receive should come from health experts.
   - Even if the cause of the outbreak or specific disease is unknown, share facts that are available. This can help you stay ahead of possible rumors.
   - Share information about the signs and symptoms of disease, who is at risk, treatment and care options, and when to seek medical care.

2. **Be Right:** Accuracy establishes credibility. Information should include what is known, what is not known, and what is being done to fill in the information gaps.
   - Public health messages and medical guidance must complement each other. For example, public health officials should not widely encourage people to go to the doctors if doctors are turning people away and running out of medicine for critically ill people.
   - Always fact check with subject-matter experts. One incorrect message can cause harmful behaviors and may result in people losing trust in future messages.

3. **Be Credible:** Honesty, timeliness, and scientific evidence encourage the public to trust your information and guidance. Acknowledge when you do not have enough information to answer a question and then work with the appropriate experts to get an answer.
   - Do not make promises about anything that is not yet certain, such as distribution of vaccines or medications without confirmed availability.
   - Clinicians should be present at press or community events to answer medical questions.

4. **Express Empathy:** Disease outbreaks can cause fear and disrupt daily lives. Lesser-known or emerging diseases cause more uncertainty and anxiety. Acknowledging what people are feeling and their challenges shows that you are considering their perspectives when you give recommendations.
   - For example, during a telebriefing for the coronavirus disease 2019 response: "*Being quarantined can be disruptive, frustrating, and feel scary. Especially when the reason for quarantine is exposure to a new disease for which there may be limited information.*"

5. **Promote Action:** In an infectious disease outbreak, public understanding of and action on disease prevention is key to stopping the spread.
   - Keep action messages simple, short, and easy to remember, like "cover your cough."
   - Promote action messages in different ways to make sure they reach those with disabilities, limited English proficiency, and varying access to information.

6. **Show Respect:** Respectful communication is particularly important when people feel vulnerable. Respectful communication promotes cooperation and rapport. Actively listen to the issues and solutions brought up by local communities and local leadership.
   - Acknowledge different cultural beliefs and practices about diseases, and work with communities to adapt behaviors and promote understanding.
   - Do not dismiss fears or concerns. Give people a chance to talk and ask questions.

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