COVID-19: Leading in Times of Crisis

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July 16, 2021, 1 p.m. ET

cdc.gov/coronavirus
Agenda

- Introduction
  - Today’s Presenters
  - Relevant Resources
- Leading in Times of Crisis
- Q&A
- Closing
Presenters

Triona Henderson-Samuel, MD
Physician (Public Health, Clinical Pathology)
Training and Workforce Development Branch, DLS, Center for Surveillance, Epidemiology, and Laboratory Services (CSELS), CDC

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## Crisis Leadership – OneLab Resources

### Identified Topics
- Crisis leadership
- Crisis communication

### Available Now
| Crisis and Emergency Risk Communication (CERC) | Online training and resources |

### Coming Soon!
| Crisis Leadership | Presentation | July 16, 2021 |
| Leadership Toolkit | Toolkit | Fall 2021 |
Crisis and Emergency Risk Communication (CERC) Program

Training

The CERC program offers in-person and online trainings on Crisis and Emergency Risk Communication. More

Manual and Tools

The CERC Manual describes core crisis and emergency risk communication principles and how they apply to each phase of a crisis. Tools are available to prepare communication plans or use during a crisis. More

CERC Corner

CERC Corners are articles based on content from CDC’s CERC Manual and are published biweekly in the CDC Emergency Partners’ Newsletter. More

Presentations

The CERC program offers archived presentations on specific CERC topics and how CERC applies in different emergencies. More

Access CERC
CERC Overview for COVID-19

CERC in an Infectious Disease Outbreak

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.
   - 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.
3. Be Relevant: Communicate timely, clear, actionable information.
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,
Crisis Leadership: An Education and Training Need

OneLab Initiative Training Needs Assessment
Clinical laboratory professionals need additional scientific, technical, and regulation trainings related to completing their daily COVID-19 work.

Managers need training in laboratory operations and supply chain management.

Clinical laboratory senior leaders need training in crisis leadership and communication.
Clinical laboratory senior leaders need training in crisis leadership and communication

“Small lab leadership needs help thinking [about emergency preparedness] on this scale.” [The CL community needs] a toolkit or a playbook to guide us through the current and future pandemics.”

“My staff are feeling overwhelmed and are burning out.”

“My staff do not feel that they are identified and appreciated as front-line healthcare workers, and it is affecting their morale.”

“I’m concerned about [tracking and maintaining] my CLIA certifications.”
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Overview

- Who I am / Why I’m here
- CDC’s COVID-19 response
  - Background
  - Laboratory and Testing Task Force mission, functions, priorities
  - Challenges and opportunities for laboratories
- Challenges, considerations, and lessons learned for leaders
- Q&A
Who I am

- U.S. Army paratrooper and Gulf War veteran
- Worked for 10 years as a CDC laboratory scientist
- Served in CDC leadership roles for the past 10 years
Why I am here

- Acting Director for Center for Surveillance, Epidemiology, and Laboratory Services
- Deployed on CDC’s COVID-19 Emergency response for three rotations
  1. Operations Deputy for the Principal Deputy Incident Manager
  2. Co-lead of Laboratory and Testing Task Force
  3. Lead of Laboratory and Testing Taskforce
CDC’s COVID-19 Emergency Response
Background

- March 2020, the COVID-19 outbreak was declared a pandemic by WHO and testing became a priority.
- Initially, CDC laboratories provided diagnostic testing capacity.
- Currently, CDC laboratories support key studies to improve understanding.
- Due to demand for surge testing, the Triage and Reporting Laboratory (TRL) was formed.
Laboratory Testing Task Force

MISSION
Increase scientific knowledge and laboratory testing capacity through work in CDC laboratories, support for clinical and public health laboratories, and engagement with federal partners, commercial laboratories, and professional organizations

FUNCTIONS
• Development of new laboratory tests and procedures
• Evaluation of laboratory reagents and instruments
• Development of technical guidance
• Testing support and technical assistance
### LTTF Priorities

#### Test Development & Distribution
Leading development of laboratory tests, including:
- Influenza SARS-CoV-2 (Flu SC2) Multiplex Assay for the detection of Influenza A, Influenza B, and SARS-CoV-2
- ELISA-based serologic test to detect SARS-CoV-2 antibodies that indicates past infection

#### Interim Guidance on Testing & Reporting
Developing and updating interim guidance for diagnostics, serology, specimen pooling, specimen handling and collection, testing, biosafety, and reporting laboratory data based on latest scientific evidence.

#### Partnerships & Technical Assistance
Facilitating partnerships with public health departments and domestic and international clinical laboratories and organizations to aid in COVID-19 testing activities, project development, and to provide technical assistance and resources.

#### Strategic Communication & Policy
Developing key messages and leveraging traditional and digital channels to reach target audiences with the right messages, at the right time, based on principles of health communication science. Providing leadership and coordination to address congressional and legislative affairs and issues management.

#### National Strain Surveillance Program (NS3)
Providing important SARS-CoV-2 baseline information, increasing publicly available viral sequence data, and establishing a representative repository of virus isolates for further characterization.
Challenges Faced by Laboratories During COVID-19 Pandemic

• Biosafety concerns
• Shortages in tests, supplies, and workforce
• Clarifying interpretation of test results
• Determining when to perform confirmatory testing
• Determining percent positivity
• Reporting laboratory data
• Sequencing and tracking new variants
• Specimen management
• Tracking testing data
Guidance for Clinical Laboratories

Antigen Tests
Antibody Tests
Pooling Procedures
Specimen Collection
Self-Testing and Collection

Laboratory Biosafety
Workplace Safety
Point-of-Care Testing
Laboratory Reporting

www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/lab
Support for Rollout of Antigen Testing

- Developed algorithms to reduce risk and increase efficacy
- Updated Public Health laboratories on use of tests
- Published guidance both for the testing algorithm and the tests that were being cleared through FDA
- Connected laboratory communities for learning about specific issues with tests that seemed anomalous at a local level, but were actually part of a larger pattern
- Established workforce training (e.g., often correctly performing the COVID-19 test was often tied to the expertise of those collecting swabs)
Challenges, Considerations, and Lessons Learned for Leadership
Challenges Facing Leaders During a Crisis

• Acting and decision making with limited information
• Managing urgent needs and quickly changing priorities
• Managing expectations of leadership and staff
• Supporting new processes as new information becomes available
Important Considerations for Leaders During a Crisis

Focus on
The mission

Learn
The strengths and limitations of team members

Be
Transparent – share what you know and what you don’t know
Lessons Learned from Leading During a Crisis

- Don’t overlook the intangibles
  - Workforce wellness
  - Staff burnout, juggling personal commitments
  - Challenges of a virtual environment
  - Strengthening morale (e.g., music, team member recognition)
- Collaborate, collaborate, collaborate with internal and external partners
- Communicate clearly
- Be open and empathetic
Prepare and Practice

Emergency Management Training

- Senior Leader Incident Command System
- Planning and Decision-Making Process in Emergency Response
- Advanced Incident Command System
- Homeland Security Exercise and Evaluation Program
- EOC Day One Training
- Public Health Readiness Certificate Program
Exercises

- U.S. Army Exercises and Operations
- Bio-Response Operational Testing and Evaluation Interagency Full-scale Exercise for Anthrax
- Exercise Design Team for CDC’s Anthrax Laboratory Surge Exercise
Partnership Engagement and Committee Service

- APHL Biosafety and Biosecurity Committee
- DHS National BioWatch Program Advisory Panel
- DoS Bureau of Diplomatic Security, Weapons of Mass Destruction Exercise Planning Committee
- FDA Diagnostic Methods for Foodborne Agents Advisory Panel
Emergency Management Training and Resources

FEMA Emergency Management Institute
www.training.fema.gov/emi
CDC Laboratory Exercises

- Anthrax Laboratory Surge Full Scale Exercise (2013)
- Influenza Virus Tabletop Exercise (2019)
- High-containment Lab Tabletop Exercise (2019)
- High-containment Lab Functional Exercise (2019)
Clinical Laboratory Partnerships
Summary

• There will be challenges when leading during a crisis
• Three important considerations:
  1. Stay mission-focused
  2. Know team members
  3. Be transparent
• Be mindful of wellness, work/life balance, and staff morale
• Prepare and practice when not facing a crisis
Q&A
For more information, contact CDC
1-800-CDC-INFO (232-4636)

The findings and conclusions in this report are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official position of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.