



Monday March 9, 2009
9:00 to 10:30

Lyon Convention Center
France

MANAGING URBAN EPIDEMICS

1. Biocrises – Managing public health emergencies in the megacities

Moderator

- **Guénaël Rodier**, Director of International Health Regulations Coordination, World Health Organisation, Switzerland

Speakers

- **Tim Brooks**, Director for Public Health Affairs, Health Protection Agency, UK
- **David L. Heymann**, Assistant Director-General for Health Security Environment and Representative of the Director-General for Polio eradication, World Health Organisation (WHO)
- **Abraham M. Palache**, Medical Director, Solvay Biologicals, Belgium
- **Jean-Louis Touraine**, Rhône French Member of Parliament, Senior Deputy Mayor of Lyon, Professor of Medicine, France
- **Isaac Weisfuse**, Deputy Health Commissioner, New York, USA

Summary

- Preparedness against urban epidemics poses a double challenge: limiting the impact of communicable diseases in urban settings, when they occur, and controlling the amplification environment that it provides.
- Exercise and simulations are needed to optimize coordination and communication between different local services.
- Epidemiological surveillance networks are critical in recognizing an issue; recent cases demonstrate that this step too often fails.
- Creating network of laboratories is essential to diagnose pathogens during outbreaks.
- New York City provides a case example of how emergency health preparedness is structured; the system is founded on an efficient surveillance network and a capacity to mobilize on all fronts multiple resources in a flexible way.
- Managing risk communication during the first 48 hours of a crisis is critical. This requires the prior understanding of local mechanisms for communication.
- Preparedness plans are the best way to address the uncertainty; these plans must cover the equitable availability and distribution of drugs and vaccines.
- WHO is providing guidelines on how to prepare for urban epidemics; however it remains up to local government bodies to implement these guidelines.
- Pandemic preparedness will rely heavily on political willingness.



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- There are fears around alteration of germs with bio-terrorism, however preparing against naturally occurring outbreaks is already a first level response against deliberately caused diseases.
- In worst cases, quarantine is an option despite the ethical challenges and social distancing issues that it poses. This political and difficult decision requires consensus building beforehand.
- Leveraging the increased capacity of facilities producing seasonal influenza vaccine is a way to build a sustainable pandemic preparedness model for the industry.

Quotes

"Politicians are on the frontline of dealing with a crisis"
Guénaël Rodier

"Management of all city services requires a coordination which can't be optimal without frequent simulations"
Jean-Louis Touraine

"The first problem is actually recognizing if you have an outbreak with an unknown or an existing disease"
Tim Brooks

"Surveillance is the backbone of public health because it gives more time to react"
Isaac Weisfuse

"Any disease outbreak anywhere in the world could be in New York City in 24 hours"
Isaac Weisfuse

"We should not wait 'till the certainty, we should make decisions in an uncertain environment"
Abraham M. Palache

"Planning is one thing; we also need the tools, vaccines to control a pandemic"
Abraham M. Palache