

Bioterrorism Preparedness Training Program Update – July 2002

By: Sunny Lucia, MPH

The challenge of preparing for and responding to a biological event is significant. Unlike the events of September 11, 2001 or other acts of violence, a bioterrorism event may be covert and difficult to identify until the disease has spread and infected many people. Therefore, the sooner the Health District is notified of unusual occurrences of illness or an unexpected increase in the number of persons presenting with a disease, the sooner a response can be initiated.

The Clark County Health District Office of Epidemiology Bioterrorism Preparedness Training Program (BPTP) was established in cooperation with the Southern Nevada Health Education Center (AHEC), to provide healthcare

professionals with information on potential agents and to reinforce their role as “first recognizers”. The two-hour training course offered by the BPTP covers awareness of the potential for bioterrorism in our community, information about disease reporting and surveillance systems, preparedness, and protocols for the medical management of six biological agents of concern: anthrax, tularemia, botulism, viral hemorrhagic fever, smallpox and plague. Training sessions have been conducted since October, 2001 in hospitals and clinics, at medical conferences, the Las Vegas Fire Academy and business executive meetings. The number and type of professionals who have received training through BPTP is shown in the table below.

TABLE 1
BPTP TRAINING SUMMARY

	October 2001– June 2002 Number Trained
Total Number	2234
Physicians	428
Nurses	896
Other Medical Professionals	175
Health Care Administration, Safety or Risk Management	192
Social Workers	42
First Responders	376
Business Executives	125

The commentary on the following page illustrates the successful collaboration between the BPTP and an important community agency:

How Are We Going to Know If We Have A Bioterrorist Event in Las Vegas?

By: Mike Myers, Assistant Chief
Las Vegas Fire Rescue

For the past 9 months, the Bioterrorism Preparedness Training Program (BPTP) at Clark County Health District Office of Epidemiology (OOE) has worked closely with Las Vegas Fire Rescue (LVFR) to educate first responders and emergency room professionals about their role in bioterrorism. It's an important role; one that BPTP calls "First Recognizers." We don't expect a bioterrorist event to be obvious, which means first responders need to be able recognize subtle changes in what is going on around them. Here are a few of the clues to early recognition that are taught in the BPTP training course:

- Clusters of patients ill from a single location
- Unusual numbers of sick or dying people presenting for care
- Patients who have flu symptoms and it's not flu season

- Atypical characteristics in a patient, i.e. an otherwise healthy individual who has no immunological compromise, presents with a rapidly progressive respiratory illness

At LVFR we encourage our emergency medical technicians and dispatchers to have heightened alertness for these clues, and that effort is paying off. Several weeks ago one of our dispatchers called OOE because she noticed several ambulance runs from the same location – clue #1. This turned out to be the early identification of a disease outbreak, and OOE was notified *as it was happening*. The outbreak was managed quickly and effectively, thanks in large part to the role of a "First Recognizer." We all need to work together and learn that this increased vigilance is not just for the moment, but the key role in bioterrorism surveillance. Remember, "When You See Unusual, Think Outbreak!" and call OOE.

When You See Unusual

Think Outbreak!

24-hour phone: (702) 383-1378

For information on training sessions, contact:

Paul Quiroz @ AHEC: 320-4407.

For further information on BPTP, call

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**Clark County Health District
Office of Epidemiology
Newsletter Survey**

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