

The Daily Briefing - Sept. 10th, 2007

New Century, New Challenges, New Dilemmas: The Global Nexus of Animal and Public Health

From a cauldron to a blender: Big stories a platform for health strategies

The ability to travel from remote jungles to New York City within eight hours, passengers transporting live chickens from country to country on commercial planes, and families moving to the city with their animals in tow are but several examples representing the movement of the slow-bubbling cauldron of microbial chaos to a whirling, churning blender.

“Things have become accelerated and are happening much quicker than in the past,” says Dick Hudak of Resort Security International.

Factors aiding this acceleration include the removal of filters such as trade restrictions that gave some protection in the past, or at least slowed down the spread of disease. Another accelerator is a gap in the understanding of cultural norms on the part of decision-makers passing regulations and those in the scientific community.

“We are now living in a smaller world. The mixing bowl is not new, but is changing. The level of impact is really what’s new here.” - Stephan Singleton of the University of Minnesota.

In Hong Kong poultry markets, consumers understand the risks of buying a perceptibly better tasting live chicken, says Hong Kong physician Rita Ho – a point that those imposing regulations must consider. “The will of the public is an important point,” says Ho.

At the root of this recognition is the need to come up with strategies that engage citizens, that are non-discriminatory, and that consider ethics as an element.

“We recognize that our unwillingness or inability to listen has intensified the greatness of this mixing,” says co-organizer Will Hueston. “We are less able to anticipate and develop containment strategies to the degree that we as scientists think we have the answers and don’t need to engage the populations who are involved.”

“It is an exponential speed with which these opportunities evolve and adapt,” says co-organizer Lonnie King. “That will speed up the whole process.”



Considering a new health commons

As evidenced by both natural and man-made environmental factors, certain drivers are contributing to the mixture in the blender.

“All of what have been called drivers,” says Terri Wright of the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, citing the Global Nexus decade map, “are, in fact, impacting bio-distress.”

Countering this bio-distress collectively is an approach put forth to the agreement of several participants. Considering how to do so, and how to label and define this approach, however, may be more difficult.

“There is no one out there,” says Matthew Hudson of the European Commission, “with a clear, independent (push for) environmental change. No one has it as a formal call...(yet) you need a worldwide response, even if the action will take place at a local level.”

Under discussion is the notion of a new health commons. The current approach is akin to the blender with the top off, says Ron DeHaven, executive Vice President, American Veterinary Medical Association. “Restrictions -- animal, plant and human – are not going to work in the current environment.” Suggestions include a commons that involves scientific solutions, engagement on the local level, and which is economi-

“Microbes are adapting more quickly than our systems can handle.”

- Ron DeHaven, American Veterinary Medical Association

cally viable. Prioritizing what to do based upon characteristics of bio-distress is also needed.

“Bio-distress is a problem,” says Caroline DeWaal of the Center for Science in the Public Interest. “The new health commons looks like it is driving toward a new solution, but the steps in the middle seem to be missing.”

Crafting these priorities means balancing the intricate relationships between numerous stakeholders. Government agencies and officials on multiple levels, those with industry and economic interests, and civil society are part of this commons.

Each of these partnerships are dynamic on multiple levels, yet require unity and integration among human partners, says Tsegaye Habtemarian of Tuskegee University, who also adds educational institutions to the mix. “This includes modifying curriculums and research opportunities, and getting educational institutions to better address the crises before us,” he says.

Crafting this commons also means accounting for previously unstated elements such as racism, classicism, and colonialism, that differentiate between a “developing and developed world,” and are expressed in the placement of migrant workers and individuals from minority populations in sometimes dangerous jobs with little to health protection, and in current educational structures.

Building into these many elements to facilitate the creation of a commons requires the illumination of unstated elements, but also a suspension of mental models, says Terri Wright – something that could be perceived as a threat.

“We wear different glasses and our experiences are very different. When it comes to the commons as a threat, some with power around the commons may have to give up power. That is threatening. It takes a shift in how you see the world,” she says.

On local and global levels

Seeing that world with a commitment toward public and animal health means engaging health concerns on local and global levels. It also involves understanding the importance of local communities and their citizenry, inside and outside the context of efficient and safe food systems.



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“(This) is a big story,” says Kaylan Paul of the Pan Himalayan Grassroots Development Foundation. Along with the burning of fossil fuels and creating environmental impact, “everything needs to move across the planet. As we’ve discussed that will lead to the spread of huge diseases...Mankind refuses to look at ecosystems which we are a part of.”

“Consumers want to eat safe food and have varieties of food available to them,” says Mike Robach of Cargill. “Focusing on a common good and having a shared view for what safe food means from the farm, whether agriculture or animal production, through processing to the consumer’s table. This is an opportunity to create shared community.”

Compartmentalization is one approach toward shared community. Partnerships that facilitate trade and sustain production systems, even where disease exists, are something that can be developed to enhance and enable local and global communities.

Greater transparency on local levels is another element that can contribute to this aim. Knowledge of food sources and an understanding of the impacts of production in the places where food is produced is important. Transparent partnerships that include data-sharing between public and private partners matter, too.

“We need to demonstrate that (companies) are meeting (safety standards) and apply systematic approaches to food safety,” says Mike Robach. Countries struggling with this may need to partner with private sector entities and share data with agencies on issues of safety and security.



Features of transparency also include recognition that it has different interpretations in different cultures, and that efforts toward transparency can lead to greater distrust as information is exposed.

“We need to bring everybody up to participate in these discussions and practice what we are talking about at the same time,” says Gloria McCutcheon of the University of South Carolina.

Non-existent safety nets a barrier

The task of creating infrastructure that can enable partnered systems for enhanced food safety increases the necessity for public health to play a role. Current infrastructure is deemed inadequate in many parts of the world, particularly around animal and public health.

“When we look at human health capacity,” says Linda Valeri of the Gillette Children’s Specialty Healthcare, “we are woefully inadequate globally.”

Very little has been done to improve safety nets in countries where problems originate. By contrast, developed countries have made investments in safety nets.

A factor within the safety net challenge is production systems that favor product over employee. “Across the globe, certain populations defined by race and social class work in dangerous jobs with increased risk of illness and death,” says Walter Williams of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Low wages, low literacy contributing to insufficient on-the-job training, and a failure to provide adequate health

care are characteristics of this specific imploded safety net.

In some countries, attempts to improve safety nets in various countries via policy have been made, yet the results do not seem to measure up. Examples include efforts to educate animal producers and a lack of recognition on the part of some countries to recognize suspect systems just across their borders while instituting policies within their own borders.

Importation barriers once a problem is detected create an additional and unique safety net implosion. “If you discover a problem with imported products, the result is to lock the door,” says Matthew Hudson. “What does that do to those back the supply countries?” Too often, casualties include weakened economic systems that may support public health.

“Filters need to be revisited,” says Alejandro Thierman of the World Organization for Animal Health. “We need to come up with a different mousetrap and need to be detecting and reacting to sources. (In working) with countries that have weak infrastructures, we should look at veterinary health as a global public good. We should do it differently in each place in different ways because there has to be incentive.”

Finding direction through partnering



Cabb

“You have to have an idea of where you want to go. If you have no sense of direction, how will you achieve the goal you have set for yourself?,” says Delilah Cabb of the Belize Health Authority, addressing her experience in coordinating partnerships between the government of Belize and private sector organizations in that country.

The solution to partnering and social engagement, says Cabb, is to remember that “one size does not fit all.”

Efforts related to the visualization of data by Google have brought that organization into practicing standard

social engagement approaches to work with global partners, says Mark Smolinski of Google's Global Public Health division.

The investment of one country into another country is a scenario where this can play out. Developing countries trying to reach standards that may be too high to achieve on their own can receive a boost, while creating a win-win for both parties.

It was suggested that those occupying leadership roles and able to convince organizations to take action are in special positions to strike partnerships that can lessen the imbalance between developed and developing nations.

"I am my brother's keeper and my sister's keeper," says Tsegaye Habtemarian. Yet, he contends, the burden of emerging diseases and animal and human health protection is one that we all carry. It is also an opportunity of which we should take advantage.

Albert Einstein's imploring that different solutions must be implemented to correct the failure of past ideas needs to be honored. Organizations and individuals should think sufficiently outside of the box to meet the challenge contained in Einstein's message. An ingredient is the diverse representation of all of those explicitly aff-

ected as well as less-obviously affected parties.

Lightweight infrastructures with heavyweight potential

Mobile phones are but one example of the promise brought about when technology is merged with pressing global health challenges.

Tools present opportunities, and Adewele Troutman of the Louisville, Kentucky, Metro Health Department, notes a local example. The advent of teleconferencing in five counties in Kentucky where he works has created an opportunity, opening up the means for departments to connect like never before and achieve greater efficiency.

While the use of tools hold promise, the structures in which the tools are used need examination. The ways in which tools are used is also worthy of examination.

Education and training are worthy of emphasis, says Maria Lourdes of the TAITA Consulting Group. "When we think about learning and awareness, we can control these or influence these to happen in some way." She urges the creation of an open space for people with different skills to converge. Technology is the vehicle.

Accumulated visions for a stronger global nexus

If convergence is successful, then:

- 1) All people will have access to safe and nutritious and affordable food that is sustainable and healthy
- 2) All people will be protected from the consequences of animal-ill health and vice versa
- 3) Health systems will be better managed in a holistic, integrated, team-based, community-based manner
- 4) The next generation does not need to have this conversation

- Health global society
- Universal acceptance of one health / one world by world leadership
- Citizens have the same rights and privileges
- World leaders and citizens recognize we are only as strong as our weakest members and our members are humans and animals

Confluence:

Health equity (physical, psychological, social and spiritual

Raising human and animal health to the highest levels

Assuring access to resources

Assuring the highest possible degree of individual liberty

The individual has a role and the community participates in population-based health



Lourdes

The use of technology is important, says Chris Brown of Michigan State University. “We didn’t talk about specific tools, but rather the context in which those will be used,” says Brown, of his work group. “It has been an incredible surprise. While it is important, I didn’t really think about it. How can we turn (this) into strategies that consider cultural differences? We have a challenge.”

Overheard:

“We need to address business leaders in a way that they may understand what may happen in the future.”

- Dick Hudak

“The organisms are not concerned about funding an intellectual property. We need to adapt to meet this challenge of the survival of the fittest.”

- Stephan Singleton

“With every solution, there needs to be involvement of the local community.”

- Rita Ho

“We need to be much more critical of the words that we use. When we use metaphors and words we need to think more deeply about them.”

- Richard Bawden

SPORTS UPDATE (by special request)
 Scores from Sept. 10th:
 Microbes - 150,000,000,000,000,000 (est.)
 Humans - 0

- All people have adequate food in a safe and sustainable way
- Can anticipate change at all levels (local, national, global) to capture opportunities and address threats
- Support the interdependencies of one health (animal, human and ecosystem)

Conceptual wheel of animal, human and ecosystem:

- Empathy
- communication skills
- Knowledge
- Incentives
- Cooperation
- politics of difference (age, ethnicity, sex)
- change makers
- Customs
- traditional wisdom

