

## **Systems or Symptoms? Finding the Right Balance in Preparing for Emergencies**

### **Discussion Guide**

- 1) What systems should you and your agency rely on during emergencies? (Communication systems, emergency management systems (ICS), public health systems, health alert networks, volunteer registries, etc.)
- 2) How well prepared are you to use those systems in an emergency? What do you anticipate posing the biggest problems?
- 3) Who in your organization/community needs to maintain advanced knowledge of specific diseases and chemical agents that might be used by terrorists?
- 4) Identify 2-3 steps you could take now to better plan and practice using the systems and resources available during an emergency.

### **Scenarios**

These brief emergency scenarios may be useful to stimulate discussion. Think about your and your co-workers' reactions. Think about the common emergency response *systems* you would utilize and the unique knowledge about the agents (or *symptoms*) you would require. What kind of balance should you aim for to be best prepared for these and the many other emergency situations that could arise?

#### *Avian flu:*

Twenty patients in your area have been hospitalized with severe flu-like symptoms in the last week, and laboratory tests have now confirmed that they are infected with avian influenza. There is no information yet about how they contracted it or how many others in the community may also be carrying it. You have had no alert from the state DOH or CDC.

#### *Chemical event:*

News reports show chaos at a football game held nearby and blame 'terrorists'. A crop duster-type airplane flew overhead, still spraying. The chemical released is causing lung and eye damage, as well as skin blistering. Many people have been injured in the crush of the fleeing crowd of about 20,000 people. Emergency responders are reporting to the scene, and many people are self-evacuating.

#### **Pilot Version – Feedback Requested**

This discussion guide is a pilot test of the tool and concept. If you would like to see us continue to produce these sorts of discussion guides in the future or have suggestions to improve them, please contact us at [cphp@uamail.albany.edu](mailto:cphp@uamail.albany.edu)