

## **Global Biological Security**

### **CPHP Grand Rounds**

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The United States and the global community today face unprecedented challenges in connection with infectious diseases. These challenges appear in the form of threats from bioterrorism and biological weapons, the resurgence of naturally occurring infectious diseases, and the vulnerabilities of national and international public health capabilities in the face of the dangers pathogenic microbes pose. The threat to global biological security became more apparent after September 11<sup>th</sup> and the subsequent anthrax attacks. In addition to the potential malevolent use of microbes by terrorist groups, such as Al Qaeda, experts have also focused attention on the proliferation of biological weapons among states, especially so-called "rogue states," and the dangers such proliferation poses to international and national security.

At the same time as national and international concerns about bioterrorism and biological weapons have been growing, the emergence and re-emergence of naturally occurring infectious diseases have risen as a political, economic, and moral issue in international relations. The crisis of emerging and re-emerging infectious diseases identified by public health experts in the 1990s is amply borne out by the resurgence of infectious diseases in old and new forms. The United States is not immune from these developments, as the appearance of West Nile virus, SARS, and monkeypox in U.S. territory demonstrate.

The converging threats of biological weapons and resurgent infectious diseases have placed national and international public health systems under enormous stress, revealing troubling weaknesses in public health governance infrastructures. In addition to highlighting inadequate funding levels for public health, these converging threats have exposed some significant problems for governments and intergovernmental organizations in balancing the protection of the public's health with respect for individual liberties. Crafting the proper legal strategies and tools to address public health threats effectively while protecting individual rights to the maximum extent possible is a primary responsibility of governments that has for too long been neglected.