

Global health security: epidemic alert and response

The Fifty-fourth World Health Assembly,

Recalling resolutions WHA48.7 on the International Health Regulations, WHA48.13 on new, emerging and re-emerging infectious diseases, and WHA51.17 on antimicrobial resistance;

Recalling that public health is a priority for development and that combating communicable diseases, which are a major burden in terms of human mortality and morbidity, provides important and immediate opportunities for progress;

Mindful of the globalization of trade and of the movement of people, animals, goods and food products, as well as the speed with which these take place;

Recognizing that, as a result, any upsurge in cases of infectious disease in a given country is potentially of concern for the international community,

1. EXPRESSES its support for:
 - (1) ongoing work on the revision of the International Health Regulations, including criteria to define what constitutes a health emergency of international concern;
 - (2) development of a global strategy for containment and, where possible, prevention of antimicrobial drug resistance;
 - (3) collaboration between WHO and all potential technical partners in the area of epidemic alert and response, including relevant public sectors, intergovernmental organizations, nongovernmental organizations and the private sector;
2. URGES Member States:
 - (1) to participate actively in the verification and validation of surveillance data and information concerning health emergencies of international concern, together with WHO and other technical partners;
 - (2) to develop and update national preparation and response plans;

- (3) to develop training for the staff involved and the exchange of good practice between specialists in response to alerts;
- (4) to update regularly information on the resources available for the surveillance and control of infectious diseases;
- (5) to designate a focal point for the International Health Regulations;

3. REQUESTS the Director-General:

- (1) to devise relevant international tools, and to provide technical support to Member States for developing or strengthening preparedness and response activities against risks posed by biological agents, as an integral part of their emergency management programmes;
- (2) to provide technical support to Member States for developing intervention programmes that prevent epidemics and respond to communicable disease threats and emergencies, particularly with regard to epidemiological investigations, laboratory diagnoses and community and clinical management of cases;
- (3) to make appropriate arrangements for the development of regional preparedness and response plans;
- (4) to provide support to Member States for strengthening their capacity to detect and respond rapidly to communicable disease threats and emergencies, especially by developing the laboratory skills needed for diagnosis and providing training in epidemiological methods for use in the field, particularly in the most exposed countries;
- (5) to make available relevant information on public health risks to Member States, relevant intergovernmental organizations and technical partners;
- (6) to provide technical support to Member States in the implementation of national efforts to contain and prevent resistance to antimicrobials.

Ninth plenary meeting, 21 May 2001
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