



CENTRE FOR SECURITY COOPERATION

Disaster Management Seminar on “Pandemic of Influenza Affecting Global Security” Zagreb, 09 - 11 November 2009

Sponsored by the Czech Republic

RACVIAC - CENTRE FOR SECURITY COOPERATION conducted a Disaster Management seminar on *Pandemic of Influenza Affecting Global Security* in Zagreb, Croatia, from 09th to 11th November 2009.



19 participants and 4 staff

The seminar promoted a better understanding of the new flu and actions needed to prevent and survey this threat. The pandemic of influenza has been declared for some time now, and the number of human cases is substantially increasing in many countries, even in those that have already been affected for a long time. Influenza A (H1N1) pandemic is still in its earliest stages of development, but over the coming weeks and months it will evolve, with possible changes in the epidemiological and clinical characteristics of the infections. The Strategic Advisory Group of Experts on Immunization (SAGE)

noted that its recommendations reflect the pandemic's current estimated severity and that, as the situation evolves and more evidence become available, the recommendations may need to be revised. Since the pandemic is increasingly threatening our normal daily life, the WHO recommended the countries to take action. However, without a common approach, all the measures taken can prove useless.

In the field of disaster management cooperation is the key element.



Col Zeljko Cepanec, Deputy Director of RACVIAC opened the seminar

Therefore, the national action plans need to be redeveloped and the international cooperation strengthened.

The orientation

The purpose of the seminar was to increase understanding of the danger posed by the pandemic of influenza and

the actions that need to be taken. It also aimed to encourage South East European (SEE) countries to present their national influenza pandemic action plans and enhance the international cooperation.



The keynote speaker Prof Dr Levent Akin

During the seminar the participants had the opportunity to present and share their experiences and future steps, expertise, opinions, lessons learned, as well as to identify gaps, possible solutions, and to explore the future steps among the regional countries. The seminar was a great opportunity to deepen contacts (networking) between representatives of national organizations and agencies engaged in the accomplishment of security and confidence building measures. It added a real value to the Southeast European (SEE) region showing fields and ways as how to work in the future as a platform for cooperation on national, regional and international level.

A view on the influenza

The seminar was opened by the Deputy Director of RACVIAC, Col Zeljko Cepanec, who stressed out a serious aspect in the spread of pandemic influenza, linked to the people traveling from one place to another, where the disease starts even before the people can understand they are the carriers of H1N1 virus, and they continue with their daily routine not knowing that influenza is threatening them and people around them. He continued his speech with encouraging health institutions to

promote policies and provide all necessary measures in advance in order to prevent the spread of the epidemic. Finally, Col

“...when influenza virus is confirmed in a region or community by the local or state health department or by the CDC, persons with fever, muscle aches, and cough most likely have influenza.”

Cepanec finished by stressing the importance of close cooperation in trying to reduce the number of people affected.

In his keynote speech, Prof Dr Levent Akin, from the Ministry of Health of Turkey, gave the general view of the influenza.



Prof Dr Seral Unal, Dean of the Medicine Faculty, Hacettepe University, Turkey

At the beginning he presented the current situation in the world and the probabilities for the future, using the official figures of WHO and having in mind that the region will come under stroke of the influenza in the following months. The pressure has been put on the public services, where a huge damage could be done if the countries do not have a vaccine strategy. Here he stressed out the importance of a national strategy, and he recommended its division into three following groups: a) Preparedness and Communication, b) Surveillance and Detection c) Response and Containment. At the end of his speech he presented the possible ways of reducing the impact, such as Surveillance,

Diagnosis, Antiviral drugs, Public health interventions and Vaccines.

Understanding the Influenza

Prof Dr Serhat Unal, Dean of the Medicine Faculty, Hacettepe University, gave a highly professional and very interesting lecture. He focused on the understanding of the virus and how it infects the human body. In his presentation Prof Dr Unal comprehensively explained the behavior of the virus and its effect to the body, by comparing the diagnoses of clinical influenza vs. common cold. He said that the main effect of the virus is on the lungs, in the form of pneumonia, so he presented the differences between clinical features of viral vs. bacterial pneumonia as well as the possible influenza-related complications. In order to be able to understand the mortality of the virus, Prof Dr Unal presented the predominant role of Bacterial Pneumonia as a Cause of Death during the Pandemic of Influenza in 1918-19, which was the first large outbreak recorded in the world and its periodic wave appears every 50-60 years. One of the most interesting topics that Prof Dr Unal presented were the vaccination strategies, since they are still untrusted in many states worldwide, because of the Adjutants and Thiomerosal, which the vaccine contains. Nevertheless, all of the epidemiologists at the seminar are convinced that the vaccines are safe and do not threaten our lives. What is more, they have also been vaccinated themselves and recommend everyone to do so, especially to threat groups.

These are: children, pregnant women, household and caregiver contacts of children younger than 6 months (e.g. parents, siblings, and daycare providers); health care and emergency medical services personnel, persons from 6 months to 24 years of age, and persons aged 25 to 64 who have medical conditions associated with a higher risk of influenza complications. Prof Dr Unal motivated the participants to be active in the round table

discussion about the vaccination strategies that followed his presentation.



The topic of “vaccine strategies” encouraged a fruitful discussion among the participants.

National action plans

In the last session of the seminar, national representatives briefed about the development of the influenza in their country, what they have learned in this short period, what actions were taken and what the ways ahead are. Special thanks go to Prof Dr Levent Akin from Turkey, Dr Beatrix Oroszi from Hungary, Dr Vladimir Draženović from Croatia, Dr Dragan Laušević from Montenegro, and Dr Raed Arafat, for their expertise and active role in the round table discussion during the seminar.

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