

Development of an Introductory Continuing Medical Education Program for Public Health Professionals and Clinicians in Syndromic Surveillance

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Objective:

The Education and Training Committee of the International Society for Disease Surveillance (ISDS) is developing an introductory online Continuing Medical Education (CME) curriculum in syndromic surveillance for physicians and other health practitioners. This curriculum would also be available for public health practitioners new to syndromic surveillance. The goal of the curriculum is to provide an introductory knowledge of syndromic surveillance for interested practitioners and stimulate healthcare provider cooperation and involvement with syndromic surveillance.

Background:

58 medical licensure boards require between 12 and 50 hours of CME for re-licensure of physicians (1). 28 states as well as Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and the Mariana Islands, require continuing nursing education (CNE) for nursing re-licensure, with requirements varying from 5 hours per year to 45 hours every 3 years. Continuing education requirements may include self-directed educational programs, academic education, or research and professional activities (2, 3). To the best of our knowledge, although there are online public health preparedness programs and journal articles that provide continuing education credits, there is no currently available online course on syndromic surveillance available for CME or CNE.

Methods:

We convened a conference of 10 experts to develop an online continuing medical education curriculum entitled "Syndromic Surveillance 101" as a consultation funded under the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) existing cooperative agreement with the National Association of City and County Health Officials (NACCHO). Topics included are: Introduction to Syndromic Surveillance, Syndromic Surveillance Data Types, Syndrome Groupings, Evaluation of Data Sources, Data Analysis, Response Algorithms, Presentation of Data and

Websites, HIPAA and Privacy Concerns, Strengths and Limitations of Syndromic Surveillance, and the Clinician Role.

Results:

The conference was held in May, 2007 as a sub-committee of the Education and Training Committee of ISDS and was attended by ten experts, including representatives from ISDS, CDC, the United States Department of Defense, local public health agencies, and universities. A draft CME program was developed, which is currently being revised. The conveners of the conference are collaborating with ISDS and Tufts Health Care Institute for development of the online CME and its accreditation. The CME is expected to be available on the syndromic.org website for members and non-members who wish to take an online program in introductory syndromic surveillance, and especially for those who require CME or CNE credits.

Conclusions:

Nurses and physicians working in public health require continuing education credits in most cases to maintain licensure. There is also a great need to educate clinicians on disease surveillance and to strengthen relationships between public health and clinicians in the event of a disaster or biologic outbreak. Public health students and other health department staff would also benefit from an online course in syndromic surveillance. Few courses in this subject are available, and by offering an online course, we expect to target a broader audience due to the flexibility of distance education. In the future, additional modules on advanced syndromic surveillance topics could be implemented as part of the CME.

References:

- 1 American Medical Association State Medical Licensure Requirements and Statistics, 2006. Available from: www.ama-assn.org/ama1/pub/upload/mm/455/licensurerereg-06.pdf
- 2 www.nweb.nursingspectrum.com
- 3 Barbara A. B runt. The impact of lifelong learning in managing risks. Available from American Nursing Association. The Nursing Risk Management Series. Available from: <http://www.nursingworld.org/mods/archive/mod311/cerm203.htm#detection>. Further information: larissa@gwu.edu