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ASSET

share and move to face nasty bugs

SECURITY, SECRECY AND TRANSPARENCY IN PUBLIC HEALTH EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

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A MATTER OF POLICY

The ASSET FINAL EVENT

Share and move for mobilization and mutual learning at local, national and international levels on Science in Society related issues in epidemics and pandemics

Rome, 30-31.10.2017

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Security, Secrecy and Transparency in Public Health Emergency Management

- Problem
- Case: H5N1
- Key learning from ASSET
- New challenges
- References

THE PROBLEM

- Trade-off between secrecy and transparency in intentionally caused outbreaks
- «Dread risk»: Public fear of biological attacks
  - Hard to determine the nature of the event
- Dual-use research
- State and non-state actors

CASE: H5N1

- Virologists from the USA and the Netherlands
- Two articles about mutation possibilities for H5N1 Transmissible to – and between – mammals
- Fear: Terrorists start mutating their own virus for use on humans?
- Issue debated between several stakeholders for 8 months
- Result: Published and openly available (2012)
- Precedential decision?
- Researchers encouraged to publish (or perish…)

Key Learning from ASSET D2.6

- **Collection** and **analysis** of the **main policy documents concerning Intentionally Caused Outbreaks** and a **taxonomy** of the **main governance problems** posed by the risk of Intentionally Caused Outbreaks in democratic societies, chiefly
  - **the tension between secrecy and transparency,**
  - freedom of research and security,
  - citizen involvement and
  - experts' decisions.

Key learning (1)

- Intentionally caused outbreaks have occurred several times throughout history. Identified ca. 300BC – present time.
- Non-state actors are ofted portrayed as the biggest fear, but very difficult to assess the actual threat.
- Uncertainties about state BW programmes and stockpiles.
  - Most discontinued after 1975 BWC implemented.
  - But what about «brain drain», researchers and stockpiles?
- Dual-use issues concerning:
  - Research
  - Items (goods, technology, software etc.)

Key learning (2)

Laboratory safety and security

- Need for biorisk management systems

Healthcare systems

- Need surveillance and assessment of epidemiological development
- Awareness of clues for detecting biological attacks

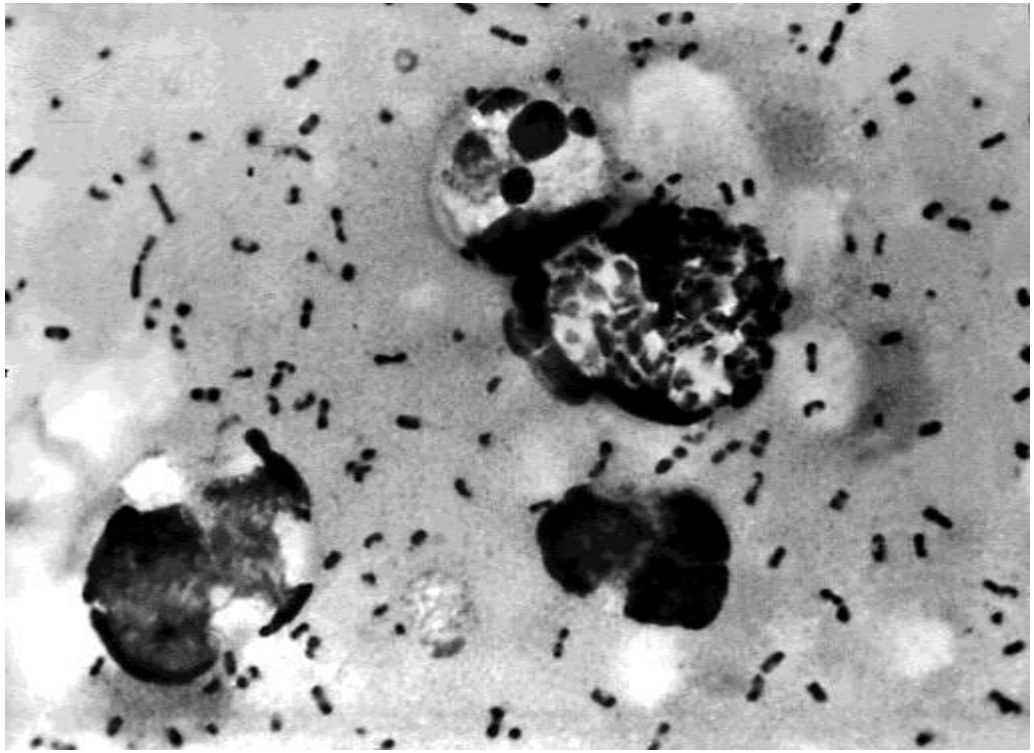
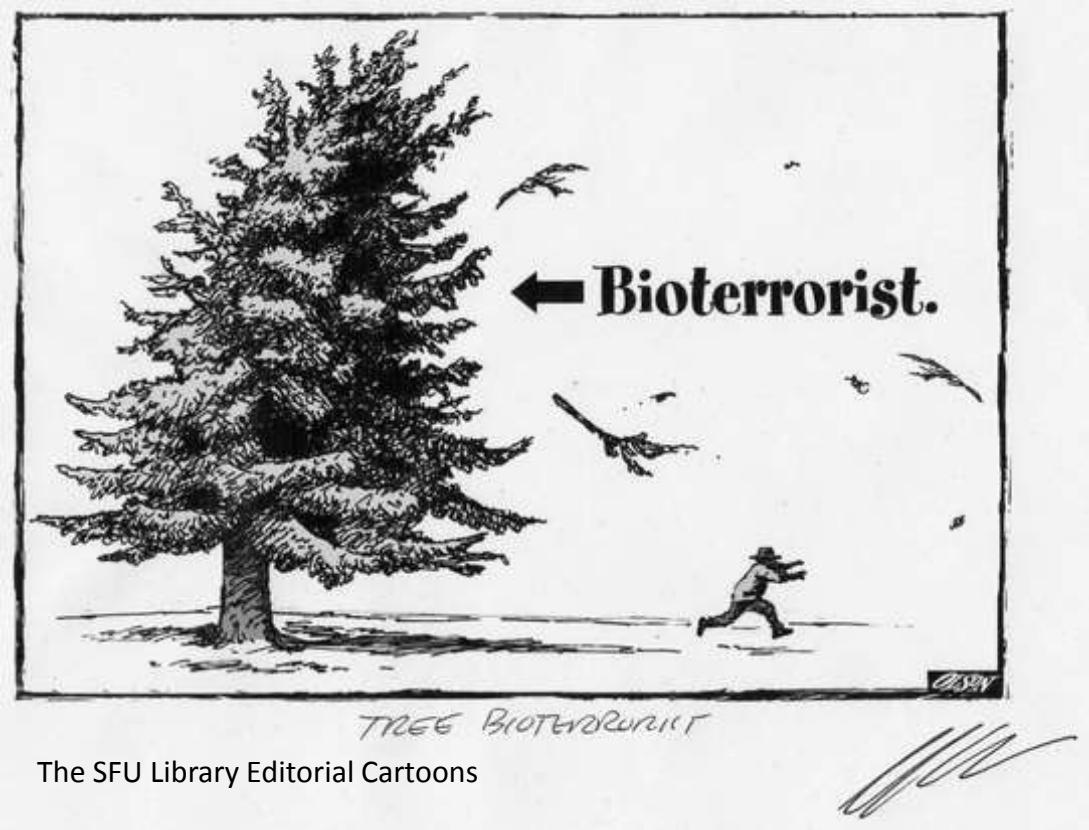


Photo credit: Getty Images

Key learning (3)

Intentionally caused outbreaks, particularly bioterrorism, is a sensitive topic, and can cause fear and miscommunication.

Interaction with the public is essential.



The SFU Library Editorial Cartoons

Key learning (4)

Communication:

- ...is key:
  - Threat-, risk- and crisis communication
  - Transparency and honesty (without compromising sensitive details)
  - Address the public before, during and after an outbreak to avoid dread risks and fear

- So is mitigation:
  - Many policy documents exist to deal with – and mitigate – issues.
  - Best practices exist and can be applied
  - There needs to be a balance between secrecy and transparency, but with an aim for public involvement

New challenges: «Fake news»

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Compounds found in black tea can neutralize bioterrorism microorganisms

Thursday, October 25, 2012 by: Ethan A. Huff, staff writer
Tags: black tea, bioterrorism, defense

Laboratory Building will provide a 22,000-square-foot facility to study such diseases as anthrax, tularemia, cholera, lyme disease, desert valley fever and other parasitic and fungal diseases. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention identified these diseases as potential bioterrorism agents.".

The mainstream media is withholding vital information about Ebola from the public, and governments of

References

- Brattekås, K., Vincent, E. (2015). «D2.6 Report on Intentionally Caused Outbreaks», Action Plan on SiS Related Issues in Epidemics and Total Pandemics (ASSET) Consortium, EC Grant Agreement No. 612236
- Brattekås, K., Davidson, R.K. (2016), "Intentionally caused outbreaks: secrecy vs. transparency" in Asset paper series, Epidemics and Pandemics: The response of Society Issue No. 3, September - December 2016, National borders and the spreading of diseases, ISSN: 2532-3784