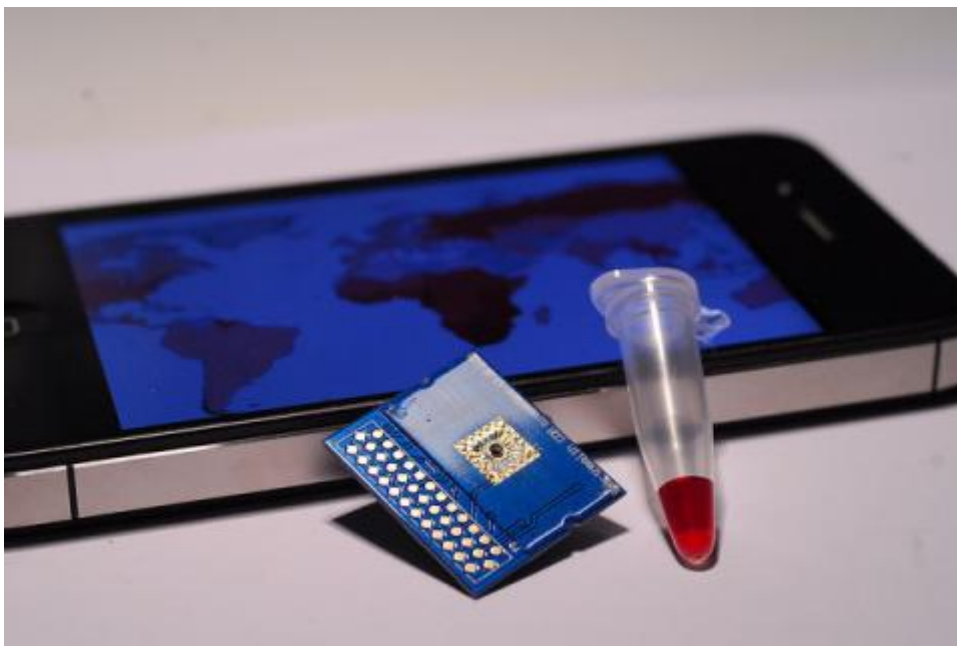




SHARE AND MOVE TO FACE NASTY BUGS

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[Flutrackers](#) ^[11] is an online platform that gather information about infectious diseases from journals, news sources and citizens around

the world. It was started in 2006 by a diverse group of volunteers, initially interested in investigating seasonal influenza, novel influenza, and chikungunya. In later years, we expanded our range by including other health threats such as the Ebola and Zika viruses, and drug resistant bacteria.

The platform is essentially an early warning system. Its members track media reports and other information to monitor global health status, looking for variances in normal disease patterns and trends. They provide support for health institutions through a constant surveillance activity. Their volunteers use their knowledge and experience in disease tracking to determine which information and data is pertinent. They live in many different countries and publish daily in Italian, Dutch, French, and English. Many ? but not all ? of them are health professionals. They are a grassroots charity and our common goal is to lessen mortality and morbidity.

Key in their mission to lessen suffering is their belief that public health and human rights are connected. Access to clean drinking water and basic sanitation (toilets) for all humans could greatly improve global public health and diminish the effects of many of the diseases that we follow. As highlighted in their mission statement, they are dedicated to the public health of the world?s citizens by advancing policies, protocols, innovations, and practices that improve the health of vulnerable populations. They will enhance the health of communities by informing, educating, developing and maintaining integrated programs. Moreover, they recognize and stress the importance of the relationship between human rights and health status.

?Joining the Flutrackers forum was a key step in my career? says Stefano Prandoni, Flutrackers senior moderator and editor. ?It allowed me to get in touch with an international and well-established community, whose reputation was based on a long-standing experience in epidemic surveillance, and whose documentation was meticulous

and evidence-based?.

New pathogens appear, old ones reemerge or broaden their range. Such events cause emergencies that need to be tackled promptly. In order to fight such threats it is thus crucial to have efficient surveillance tools, especially in those countries where ? due to weak governments and the lack of well-organized healthcare facilities ? a failure or a delay in communicating the risk to global health institutions may increase the dangerousness of infectious diseases outbreaks.

Unfortunately, global health crisis like SARS or avian flu were followed by a growing tendency ? even amongst healthcare professionals ? to underestimate the risk posed by these phenomena. If the consequences of these events have not been as dramatic as we were expecting, it is just a matter of good luck. In absence of proper preparedness plans, we run the risk of being overwhelmed by future emergencies.

Sharon Sanders

FluTrackers President and Editor-in-chief

Stefano Prandoni

FluTrackers Senior Moderator and Editor

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