

NHPF Forum Session

Meeting Announcement

**NATIONAL
HEALTH
POLICY
FORUM**

Measuring Public Health Preparedness: Are We Ready Yet?

A PRESENTATION BY:

Nicole Lurie, MD
*Senior Natural Scientist and
Professor of Health Policy*
RAND Corporation

WITH A ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION FEATURING:

Stephan G. Reissman, PhD
Public Health Advisor
Coordinating Office of
Terrorism Preparedness and
Emergency Response
Centers for Disease Control
and Prevention

Elin Gursky
Principal Deputy for Biodefense
ANSER/Analytic Services

Shelley Hearne
Executive Director
Trust for America's Health

And selected state and local public health officials.

**Friday,
June 3, 2005**

8:30 am — *Breakfast*

9:00–11:00 am — *Discussion*

Reserve Officers Association of the United States

One Constitution Avenue, NE
Congressional Hall of Honor —
Fifth Floor

*(Across from the Dirksen Senate
Office Building)*

To register:

Please send your contact information to nhpfmeet@gwu.edu as soon as possible. Space is limited.

THE GEORGE
WASHINGTON
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Measuring Public Health Preparedness: Are We Ready Yet?

As the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) prepares to make the fourth major installment payment in an ongoing effort to bolster public health emergency preparedness capacity at the state and local level, questions continue to linger regarding the return on this investment. With over three billion dollars invested in preparedness development efforts, policymakers are asking "Have these funds been well spent?" "Are state and local public health agencies now adequately prepared to respond to a bioterrorism attack or naturally occurring public health emergency?"

The answers to these questions are not entirely clear, and a "yes" to one does not guarantee a "yes" to the other. A number of publicly and privately sponsored studies indicate that although much progress has been made in improving the public health infrastructure, significant deficiencies still exist. Areas of concern include workforce shortages, inadequate disease surveillance capabilities, difficulties in regional coordination, and problems with incompatible communication protocols and equipment.

Though existing analyses are largely consistent in identifying gaps in preparedness capabilities, a comprehensive, rigorous evaluation of state and local capacities has not been conducted. Some states and localities have begun to assess public health preparedness, and a number of tools and instruments are available to help individual jurisdictions take stock of their efforts. However, a clear, common understanding of what it means to be adequately prepared has not yet emerged.

SESSION OVERVIEW

This Forum session will examine the current status of state and local public health preparedness capabilities and explore methods for monitoring readiness in the future. Current efforts to define preparedness standards, such as the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's guidance for the state cooperative agreements and the Department of Homeland Security's Target Capabilities List, will be discussed. The need for multiple metrics and performance assessment techniques will be examined from federal, state, and local perspectives.

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NHPF is a nonpartisan education and information exchange for federal health policymakers.

Federal policymakers have identified the need for well-defined preparedness standards. CDC's guidance for the fiscal year 2005 state cooperative agreements includes new performance indicators that will replace the critical benchmarks established in prior funding cycles. The Department of Homeland Security is also drafting a Target Capabilities List that identifies the capabilities needed to perform critical homeland security tasks and includes public health functions, such as mass prophylaxis. As the measures and methods for evaluating preparedness evolve, policymakers hope to set clearer expectations, increase accountability, encourage consistency across jurisdictions, and improve readiness.

The Forum session will begin with a presentation by Nicole Lurie, MD, on analyses related to state and local preparedness development efforts that she recently completed for the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Public Health Emergency Preparedness within the Department of Health and Human Services.

Dr. Lurie's presentation will be followed by a facilitated roundtable discussion, featuring expert panelists who are experienced in assessing preparedness capabilities. Selected state and local public health officials have also been invited to participate. The discussion will focus on exploring the measures, metrics, and methods that are likely to further the goal of ensuring public health readiness.

KEY QUESTIONS

- Do existing preparedness standards adequately identify priorities? Do federal, state, and local health officials agree on these priorities?
- How should preparedness capabilities be assessed now and in the future?
- Who should be responsible for monitoring preparedness? Should jurisdictions be responsible for gauging their own progress, or should independent evaluations be pursued? If independent assessments are deemed necessary, what organization should take on this role?
- Who should bear the cost of these evaluative efforts?
- What role should drills and exercises play in monitoring preparedness? To what extent do security concerns preclude dissemination of after-action findings?
- Can preparedness goals be distilled into measurable, meaningful performance indicators? What challenges make this endeavor difficult?
- To what extent should metrics-based expectations be built into management practices at the state and local level?

- Should cost effectiveness or resource availability be considered? Should state and local financial contributions to the public health infrastructure be a factor in preparedness assessments?
- Is accreditation of state and local public health agencies a viable option for ensuring preparedness?
- Should consequences be established for poorly performing jurisdictions? Would such consequences take the form of penalties or remediation? How would these consequences influence the integrity of monitoring efforts?

SPEAKERS

Nicole Lurie, MD, is a senior natural scientist and the Paul O' Neill Alcoa Professor of Health Policy at the RAND Corporation. Prior to that, she had a long affiliation with the University of Minnesota and Hennepin County Medical Center, where she was professor of medicine and public health and, most recently, medical advisor to the commissioner at the Minnesota Department of Health. From 1998 to 2001, she took a leave of absence to serve as principal deputy assistant secretary of health in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS). Dr. Lurie has a long history in the health services research field. Most recently a large portion of her project work has revolved around public health preparedness. She was a principal investigator for the California Public Health Infrastructure Investment project and currently is co-leading the work to develop resources and prepare analyses to describe and enhance key aspects of state and local public health emergency preparedness for the DHHS Office of Public Health Emergency Preparedness.

Stephan G. Reissman, PhD, is currently the lead for the Preparedness Measurement Team in the Office of Strategy and Innovation at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Dr. Reissman is leading a project applying the CDC's "Evidence-Based Performance Goals for Public Health Preparedness" for use by state and local health departments. His technical expertise includes working with a multi-disciplinary team to develop an incident command system (ICS) model to integrate emergency public health response activities with emergency management practices. He has more than 25 years of experience in the field of emergency services and operations, including serving as administrator of emergency medical services agencies, hospital administrator, educator and provider of emergency care in New York City, and expert consultant for emergency programs and services.

Elin Gursky, ScD, is the principal deputy for biodefense in the National Strategies Support Directorate of ANSER/Analytic Services in Arlington, VA, where she focuses on biodefense and health security issues. From 1986 through 1998, Dr. Gursky held senior executive

positions in local and state public health agencies in Maryland and New Jersey. In 1999, she accepted the position of vice president for public health for a 10-hospital acute care health system, where she worked to bridge the practice gaps between medicine and public health. In August 2001, Dr. Gursky became a senior fellow at the Johns Hopkins Center for Civilian Biodefense Strategies, where, among other responsibilities, she analyzed the response to the anthrax attacks. Dr. Gursky joined ANSER in September 2002. Dr. Gursky has authored several recent publications examining readiness, including *Progress and Peril: Bioterrorism Preparedness Dollars and Public Health*.

Shelley Hearne, PhD, is the executive director for the Trust for America's Health, a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization dedicated to preventing epidemics and protecting people. Dr. Hearne is also a visiting scholar at the Johns Hopkins School of Public Health, teaching policy and public health preparedness, and is the national recipient of the 2004 Delta Omega Curriculum Award, which honors innovative public health teaching. She has worked in various roles in government and nonprofits, ranging from the executive director of the Pew Environmental Health Commission to the director of the New Jersey Office of Pollution Prevention. Dr. Hearne is a former chair of the American Public Health Association's Board and a former vice president of the Council on Education for Public Health, which accredits graduate public health institutions. She has served on numerous national biosecurity committees and is author of the annual report scoring state preparedness, *Ready or Not: Protecting the Public's Health in the Age of Bioterrorism*.