

University of Minnesota Pandemic Influenza Tabletop Exercise

Overview

Key Aspects of the Exercise

This exercise covers the early impact on the University of Minnesota of a global influenza pandemic. The exercise is being carried out by the Center for Infectious Disease Research and Policy (CIDRAP) and the AHC Emergency Preparedness Program at the University of Minnesota. Key aspects of the exercise include the following:

- The exercise involves a novel H5N1 avian influenza strain that is capable of causing severe disease in humans (similar to the 1918 pandemic) and is readily transmissible through person-to-person spread.
- Vaccine against the novel H5N1 strain will not be available until approximately 4 months after the pandemic arrives in the United States.
- The scenario is assumed to be plausible and the scripts are designed to be relatively realistic, given current information about H5N1 avian influenza in Asia.
- The events unfold in the order that the scripts are presented; however, there may be days to weeks between each of the scripts and, therefore, the exercise is not intended to simulate a “real-time event.”
- The scenario is designed to assess certain key decisions and issues that will need to be addressed relatively early in the course of the pandemic; therefore, the exercise focuses on the early stages of the pandemic. Given time constraints, the exercise is not intended to cover the entire first wave of the pandemic period.

Exercise Format

The exercise will last approximately 3 hours and will be broken down into a series of five scripts, each with a discussion time of 25 minutes. The scripts include the following features:

- A timeframe for the script (measured in weeks or months)
- A timeline for discussion
- A list of events that have occurred
- Data injects as appropriate
- A list of issues to be considered for discussion

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Exercise Goal and Objectives

Goal

The overall goal of the exercise is to assess: 1) how the existing emergency response structure at the University of Minnesota will address the challenges posed by pandemic influenza and 2) how the University will coordinate its response with state and local public health agencies and with Fairview University Medical Center.

Objectives

- Assess the decision-making process between the University of Minnesota, Hennepin County Human Services and Public Health Department, Fairview University Medical Center, and the Minnesota Department of Health in responding to pandemic influenza at the University of Minnesota.
- Identify coordination issues and communication strategies needed between the University of Minnesota, Fairview University Medical Center, Hennepin County Human Services and Public Health Department, and the Minnesota Department of Health for an effective overall response to pandemic influenza.
- Identify the incident management structure for responding to pandemic influenza at the University of Minnesota.
- Evaluate selected operational aspects of responding to pandemic influenza at the University of Minnesota (such as surge capacity, triage of ill students, management of students living in residence halls, canceling of classes, and maintenance of essential services).
- Assess risk communication strategies for communicating to students, staff, faculty, and parents and assess coordination of risk communication messages between public health agencies and the University.
- Identify key topic areas where further planning is needed to assure an effective overall response to pandemic influenza at the University of Minnesota.

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Participants

University of Minnesota

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