

ANNEX 8. HANTAVIRUS PREVENTION IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

RAPID RESPONSE DURING THE 1993 OUTBREAK

At the United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), educational efforts were primarily focused on educating medical and public health professionals. Since this was a newly recognized disease, the physicians and nurses needed to be informed about the disease, and the state epidemiologists needed to know what to do if their states had any cases. Therefore, the first educational materials and activities were planned for this target audience. A comprehensive video was developed and aggressively disseminated to this group and used in other, subsequent educational activities. These activities included training courses for state public health laboratories on diagnostic testing of hantavirus and an audio conference for physicians, nurses, laboratorians, epidemiologists, and pathologists.

For the public, CDC developed and then promoted a video in both English and Spanish versions, set up a telephone hot line to answer the public inquiry calls, provided materials on request, and developed an Internet site. One major goal was to work with public health professionals from the most affected states to generate locally appropriate programs in their areas. As additional states recognized cases, this material was shared with them and they further disseminated it to local health departments. A similar pattern has been useful with other countries undergoing their first experiences with hantavirus pulmonary syndrome (HPS).

CDC also worked with the private sector in raising the public awareness of HPS. In this collaboration, CDC pro-

vided the content, arranged for interviews with HPS experts, and reviewed draft news releases and materials. The private sector provided the financial and human resources in marketing and advertising. Video and audio news releases were produced for broadcast stations to use across the nation. Print materials targeting the general public and prevention articles for newspapers and magazines were also developed.

CURRENT PREVENTION MEASURES

Information on HPS control and prevention measures is disseminated regularly as part of ongoing educational efforts. State health departments are updated periodically by mail on a variety of subjects. Mailings communicate news or information (e.g., the increased possibility of an outbreak of HPS during an epizootic related to El Niño climate changes), provide materials such as case investigation kits or treatment guidelines, and offer information about CDC services and resources, such as what diagnostic testing is available, how to submit samples for testing, and what prevention materials are available.

In 1998, the CDC hosted the Fourth International Conference on Hemorrhagic Fever with Renal Syndrome and Hantaviruses in Atlanta, Georgia. Much recent data on hantavirus research and prevention coming out of that meeting are available on the Internet at <http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/diseases/hanta/hps/noframes/intro.htm>.