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REGIONAL OFFICE FOR THE
Americas

Study Tour: Risk Communications

WHO-Sponsored Study Tour for the People's Republic of China: Risk Communications for Public Health



China has coped with the emergence of more than 40 new infectious diseases over the past three decades; one of the most virulent and widespread of these was the SARS outbreak of 2003. China and the world's response to the SARS outbreak demonstrated the need for efficient health emergency response and particularly, in effectively communicating to the public. This study tour, "Risk Communications for Public Health," is designed to present basic theories and techniques on risk communications. Through this one-week training program, the participating health officials from the Guangzhou Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, had the opportunity to gain an understanding of the following:

Overview of the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

- In-depth description of CDC's operations and activities;
- Strategies for effective coordination of activities among the CDC and other government agencies.

Basic Theories of Risk Communications

- Risk communication strategies and impact on public health emergencies;

- Similarities and differences between risk communications and health education;
- Importance of public opinion in risk communications

Practical Skills and Applications in Risk Communications

- Write and present effective, culturally-appropriate messages on health emergency issues for the general public;
- Effective means to increase China's public prevention and risk awareness;
- Implementation of effective approaches in dealing with media relations;
- Case-study of successful risk communication strategies;
- Assessment of the credibility and effectiveness of statements issued by government spokespersons in public health emergencies;
- Factors that influence the perceived trustworthiness of spokespersons.

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