

Intentional Foodborne Illness Events Involving Chemical Agents

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Session Objectives

- Increase awareness of signs and symptoms of atypical events
- Highlight some similarities and differences between investigations of non-intentional vs. intentional incidents
- Practice problem solving skills using a real world example
- Share some lessons learned

Potential Indicators of Intentional Act Identified by Epi and Surveillance Systems

- Increased morbidity and mortality
- Atypical seasonal appearance of disease
- Increased severity of symptoms
- Increased failure rate of traditional drug therapies
- Unusual signs and symptoms or rapid onset of illness after eating or drinking

Signs & Symptoms of Exposure to Critical Biologic or Chemical Agents

- Sepsis
- Flaccid muscle paralysis
- Gastro-Intestinal illness
- Bleeding disorders
- Severe flu-like illness
- Burning or bitter taste
- Encephalitis/meningitis
- Other neuro disorders



Source: St. Louis University

Laboratory Issues: Identifying the Causative Agent



Food Testing in Michigan

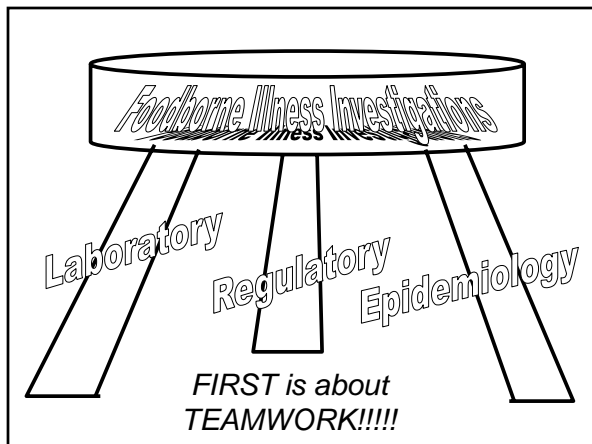
- Importance of getting samples to the right government laboratory
- Memo of Understanding between MDCH, MDA, and FDA
 - MDCH Lansing Laboratory is triage point for all food specimens (law enforcement or local public health)
 - Determine which lab system will test food samples depending on agent suspected

Sorting Out Roles and Responsibilities

- Who
- What
- Where
- When
- How
- Why

WHO: Likely Agencies Involved

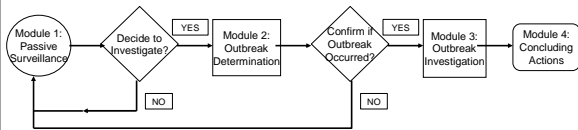
- Local health departments
- Michigan Dept. of Agriculture
- Michigan Dept. of Community Health
- USDA and/or FDA
- Michigan State Police
- FBI
- Local law enforcement



WHAT: Similarities

- Investigators use the same skill set and resources mentioned during FIRST training
 - Surveillance network
 - Communication
 - Rapid identification and response capability
 - Epidemiology/Communicable Disease
 - Environmental Health
 - Laboratory

Outbreak Investigation Flow Diagram



Shared Public Health and Law Enforcement Investigation Objectives

- Protect public
- Prevent panic
- Prevent spread of agent
- Identify source of agent

WHAT: Differences

- **Multiple agency coordination**
 - Unified Command
- **Issues to clarify up front:**
 - Which agency leads which parts
 - Different objectives by agencies
 - Information sharing

Distinct Objectives

Public Health

- Inform public of potential health risks
- Identify the source or agent
- Protect patient confidentiality and restrict access to medical records

Law Enforcement

- Determine if illegal act occurred
- Identify, apprehend, prosecute perpetrators
- Protect source confidentiality and restrict access to classified docs.

Where: When Investigators Are Not Co-located

- Importance of face-to-face meetings
- Regularly scheduled & concise meetings to update and plan
- Conduct joint site visits and interviews whenever possible

When: Establishing Mutually Agreeable Priorities

- Create action plans clearly identifying who is responsible for what and when
- Determine best way for each agency to contribute expertise and resources
 - Law enforcement - criminal investigation
 - Public health - human health investigation
- Do not abdicate responsibilities

When Things Aren't Going As Planned

- “Begin with the end in mind” – what alternatives can achieve the objective?
- Clarify who is the decision-maker and what information is needed to assist them
- Refocus on effective information sharing
 - Honest dialogue vs. debate

How: Relationships

- Joint investigations can be cross-cultural experiences
 - Understanding and addressing potential cultural barriers
- Clarify and re-clarify roles, responsibilities, expertise, and resources
- Commit to keeping partners “in the loop” and fighting for feedback

**Why:
Shared Investigation Objectives**

- Protect public
- Prevent panic
- Prevent spread of agent
- Identify source of agent

**Summary:
Importance of Pre-Crisis Collaboration**

- Must develop working relationships before crisis
- Learn each other's terminology, objectives, and methods
- Identify mutually agreeable methods for information sharing

**Summary:
Recommended Actions**

- Develop pre-plans on how to integrate investigations
- Joint exercises to test existing plans and relationships
- Identify ways to appropriately increase involvement in real world investigations
