

WEB QUESTIONS RE PANDEMIC March 2006

I am a department APO. What provisions should the department be thinking about to be prepared for such a scenario?

For example:

1) At what point should the department be instituting an organizational response to the threat? (Do we wait till the WHO lists Edmonton on the list as a travel advisory alert? Would the President's Office or Provost's Office be making the announcement as to the threat to the institution?)

"The department will follow the lead from the President/Provost offices. We already have an Emergency Response Plan and the Pandemic Roll Out Plan will follow (rides on top) of the Emergency Response Plan. We just modify it for pandemic where appropriate. We are governed by provincial legislation and we will follow their mandate. Secondly, we are working in partnership with Capital Health and they will assist us with services and we them."

2) What preparations need to be considered to deal with say, continuing teaching of classes? Should Departments and their instructors be thinking about a plan converting classes to electronic contact and content?

"Good question. We are in the process of meeting with Deans to determine how we will manage the academic issues, i.e. back up for course delivery, resorting work obligations, use of technology. We can not have a faculty/department working in isolation because the students flow from course to course across campus."

3) What preparations need to be considered to deal with say, continuation of research at the department level?

"In the area of research, we too are meeting with the VP Research Office to determine MOUs and research priorities."

4) What preparations need to be considered to deal with the health and safety of administrative support staff? of faculty? of students?

"The health and safety of all personnel/students is very important. Here we are looking at a number of initiatives. First we need an education campaign on hand washing, shielding, self care etc. From the web site you will note that Alberta Health has an excellent booklet called "It is in your hands".

The entire text is on the web thanks to Rob Lake. Secondly, all of us need to have a basic understanding of viruses and in this case Avian flu. Please note I am the lead on the Public Health Response Committee which means that we are not only preparing for the next pandemic but any public health crises."

5) What methods of communication need to be considered to monitor the health and safety and security of the community and physical space and property in the physical space. (Should we have a system where folks need to check in by phone? By opt-in email distribution lists? And if so, which folks? How do we ensure up-to-the-minute access to the community?)

"One of the corner stones of pandemic planning is communication. We have communication trees in place. Philip Stack is the Lead on the Business Contiguity Committee. Communication is a core function for this committee and you will be contacted for unit response plans."

6) If something goes wrong (and we get an outbreak) what is the appropriate response? a) if someone gets sick in class b)if a sick person comes to the office c)if you find a dead body d)if someone does confirm they have been diagnosed with the avian flu? e)if a student reports to an instructor they are unable to complete an assignment because they've been diagnosed with avian flu or say, their mother has been diagnosed - how does an instructor validate the diagnosis.

"The first correct response is the care and well being of those people discovering a dead body or being diagnosed with Avian flu. If even one person dies all of us will be profoundly affected by the death. The second concern is safety. If a person develops the symptoms, they are not to be at work. Student Health Services is preparing a pandemic response and they will be the first line of information. In terms of validation of the diagnosis, there will be none. Health services will be stretched, medical laboratories will be backed up and so we will have to operate on a trust basis. In a time of crisis most people will be very honest and helpful. Remember the pandemic will not only be on campus it will be in all parts of the world."

PHRC Meeting
March 20, 2006