

Boston University Medical Campus

Community Liaison Committee (CLC)

National Emerging Infectious Diseases Laboratories (NEIDL)

MEETING NOTES

Tuesday, February 25, 2014
6:00 pm. * 620 Albany Street

ATTENDING

Robert Francis, Co-Chairperson, CLC; Linda Lukas, Co-Chairperson, CLC; Valerie Shelley, CLC; James Keeney, CLC; Robert Timmerman, CLC; Dolly Battle, CLC; Valeda Britton, Executive Director, Community Relations/MED, BU; Chimel Idiokitas, Assistant Director, Community Relations/MED, BU; Elizabeth Leary, Director, Community Relations/CRC, BU; Kevin Tuohey, Executive Director, Research Compliance, BU; Ronald Corley, Associate Director, NEIDL; Jack Murphy, Interim Director, NEIDL; Dr. John H. Connor, NEIDL Investigator, Associate Professor, Microbiology, BU;

At 6:00 pm, Co-Chair Francis opened the meeting.

PRESENTATIONS

Identifying Ways of Stopping Viral Infections

Dr. John Connor gave a presentation on his BSL-2 work on viruses and how our body reacts to the invasion of these viruses. Dr. Connor explained that his team identifies small molecules that keep viruses from invading cells. This is a giant step towards identifying effective medication to decrease suffering from infectious disease. His team is working toward making vaccines that they believe will protect people from fatal viruses such as, Ebola, Marburg, and Lassa Fever. He mentioned that there are 5 different known types of Ebola and NEIDL researchers hope to create 2nd generation vaccines to treat multiple infectious diseases. Dr. Connor's work on Ebola virus was recently featured in Discover Magazine's top 100 stories of 2013 (<http://discovermagazine.com/2014/jan-feb/42-ebola-and-rabies-toward-a-cure#.UxZFmc6wUXE>).

Mr. Francis and Ms. Battle asked about the availability of a vaccine for all 3 viruses? Dr. Connor said that a company called "Profectus" www.profectus.com has been developing vaccines, and the Ebola vaccine is in Phase 1 clinical trials. Dr. Connor does not know when a vaccine will be approved by the FDA, but said there may be a vaccine for Ebola within the next 5 years.

ADMINISTRATIVE

The January 2014 CLC minutes were approved.

INSTITUTIONAL BIOSAFETY COMMITTEE (IBC) REPORT

Mr. Keeney and Mr. Timmerman both gave updates on the protocols discussed at the IBC meeting. Mr. Keeney noted that he did not see anything in the protocols that he reviewed that would harm the community. Mr. Timmerman remarked that the protocols were well written, understandable and not full of jargon. He regarded this as progress in transparency.

COMMUNITY RELATIONS REPORT

Ms. Britton gave an update on the City Councilor Yancey ordinance. This ordinance proposed to ban BSL-4 research in the city of Boston. It was reported that all City Councilors, except for Councilor Yancey have toured the NEIDL. Ms. Britton reminded the CLC that two independent panels had reviewed the most recent Risk Assessment put together by NIH. It was determined that the Risk Assessment was sound and credible.

CLC members agreed to change the meeting location from the NEIDL to 650 Albany St. effective immediately. Mr. Francis added that meetings will be “business as usual” with time left at the end for public comments.

SCIENTIFIC & RESEARCH UPDATE

Dr. Corley informed the CLC that new BSL-4 simulation space has not been readied and opened at the NEIDL. Simulation research will be performed with BSL-2 agents in order to do SOP walkthroughs and reviews in preparation for opening at BSL-4.

Dr. Corley also spoke about the partnership the NEIDL is beginning to develop with Brazil, in a continuing effort to increase our global collaborations. With the Olympics and the World Cup being played there, it is important to help address infectious disease issues in the country. It was noted that 40% of the febrile diseases in Brazil cannot be accurately diagnosed.

Dr. Corley reminded the CLC that zoonotic diseases are a real concern to the world. There is a new infectious disease that is identified every year or year and a half. It is difficult to diagnose, treat or develop vaccines for these new diseases and further research needs to be done in a safe environment such as the NEIDL. As examples: 1. Chikungunya is a mosquito borne disease that is transmitted to humans and has traveled from Africa, to India, Israel, Italy and is now present in the Caribbean. 2. A polio type disease being seen in California is similar to a disease infecting children in Southeast Asia. 3. Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS), a disease caused by a virus similar to SARS, has been infecting humans in the Middle East for almost 2 years, and only recently has it been shown to likely be transmitted from camels to humans. It can also be transmitted from human to human. 4. The bird flu H7/N9 is found in chickens and migratory birds and can be transmitted from birds to humans. It represents a real concern because if it mutates such that it is transmitted human to human, it could lead to the next pandemic.

REGULATORY

Mr. Tuohey gave a quick update on regulatory compliance. He reported that the documents for the BSL-4 permit have been submitted to the Boston Public Health Commission (BPHC) and the Boston Biosafety Committee (BBC) is in the process of reviewing these documents.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:30 PM
Next Meeting: March 25th 2014