

Boston University Medical Campus

Community Liaison Committee (CLC)

National Emerging Infectious Diseases Laboratories (NEIDL)

MEETING NOTES

Tuesday, May 27, 2014

6:00 pm. * 650 Albany Street rm. L714

ATTENDING

Robert Francis, Co-Chairperson, Linda Lukas, Co-Chairperson, CLC; Kenneth Nwosu, CLC; James Keeney, CLC; Robert Timmerman, CLC; Valeda Britton, Executive Director, Community Relations/MED, BU; Chimel Idiokitas, Assistant Director, Community Relations/MED, BU; Elizabeth Leary, Director, Community Relations/CRC, BU; Dr. Elke Muhlberger, Associate Director of Microbiology BUSM and Director of the NEIDL Biomolecule Production Core; Dr. Jack Murphy, Interim Director, NEIDL; Dr. Ronald Corley, Associate Director, NEIDL; and a member of the public.

At 6:00 pm, Co-Chairs Francis and Lukas opened the meeting.

PRESENTATIONS

Demystifying the Ebola Virus

Dr. Elke Muhlberger gave a presentation on the BSL-4 Marburg and Ebola viruses, and the research she and her team are involved with. Dr. Muhlberger has over 20 years of experience doing research on these pathogens, including many years of research at the Institute of Virology at the University of Marburg, Germany. She introduced two experienced members of her team and noted that currently they all travel to other BSL-4 labs out of state to conduct their BSL-4 lab research. Upon receiving regulatory approvals, Dr. Muhlberger's group will likely be the initial group working on BSL-4 pathogens at the NEIDL.

Dr. Muhlberger explained that all BSL-4 pathogens are viruses, not bacteria and have a similar makeup. Most BSL-4 viruses cause severe disease and multi-organ failure. However, they are easy to deactivate. They are killed by among other methods, UV light, heat (boiling water for 3 minutes), and disinfectants.

Dr. Muhlberger noted that the Marburg and Ebola viruses are not spread between humans by the aerosol route. To spread human-to-human requires close personal contact, and an exchange of blood and body fluids. While there have been cases of lab workers being infected with Ebola and Marburg outside of the United States, these viruses have not spread to the community from these incidents. Use of contaminated needles in hospitals in Africa in the 1970s have contributed to the spread of these diseases. Also, medical workers providing care to Ebola case patients without using personal protective measures are especially at risk as are people who perform funeral rites on the deceased.

ADMINISTRATIVE

The March 2014 CLC minutes were approved.

INSTITUTIONAL BIOSAFETY COMMITTEE (IBC) REPORT

Mr. Keeney and Mr. Timmerman both gave updates on the protocols discussed at the April and May IBC meetings.

COMMUNITY RELATIONS REPORT

Ms. Britton gave an update on BU community relations activities. She announced that a community grant of \$2500 was awarded to Youth Enrichment Services (YES) and another grant of \$2500 was awarded to Project Right. Six scholarships have been awarded to BU's SummerLab Biotechnology Program at BU CityLab Program. The students attend Cathedral High School, Snowden, City on a Hill Charter, Madison Park Technical Vocational High School, and the Margarita Muniz Academy. These high school students will spend a week getting hands-on laboratory experience. Outreach to distribute 25 scholarships to BU athletic camps was ongoing. Camp scholarships include such sports as basketball, hockey, lacrosse, and soccer. Also, Ms. Britton mentioned that she is working with the BU School of Education and NEIDL researchers to develop an infectious disease class for middle school students. CLC members encouraged Ms. Britton to proactively seek out S.T.E.M. opportunities and partnerships with Boston schools and businesses, especially pharmaceutical companies.

SCIENTIFIC & RESEARCH UPDATE

Dr. Corley reported that the City Council had not voted in favor of the Yancey ordinance to ban BSL-4 research in Boston. Further, the State Court had ruled that the Secretary of Energy and Environmental Affairs had properly determined that the Supplemental Final Environmental Impact Report complied with the Massachusetts Environmental Policy Act. He reminded the CLC that before the NEIDL is permitted to do BSL-4 research, BPHC and CDC approvals are needed. He mentioned that the Boston Biosafety Committee was still reviewing the BSL-4 permit application. The CDC would be doing a site inspection of the BSL-3 select agent labs soon. The BPHC had already approved the transfer of existing BSL-3 lab research to the NEIDL. It is anticipated that the BSL-3 labs handling select agents will be fully operational in the NEIDL by late fall. Dr. Corley announced that researchers from Saudi Arabia would be touring the NEIDL. They were concerned with Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS), a viral, airborne BSL-3 pathogen. He then discussed the three US cases of MERS. Dr. Murphy explained that the BSL-4 simulations in BSL-2 labs have been very important in helping the NEIDL researchers and staff develop and revise standard operating procedures.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:30 PM
Next Meeting: June 24, 2014