

Boston University Medical Campus

Community Liaison Committee (CLC)

National Emerging Infectious Diseases Laboratories (NEIDL)

MEETING NOTES

Monday June 18, 2018

6:30 pm. * 620 Albany St.

ATTENDING

Robert Francis, CLC; Jean Lee, CLC; J. Kevin Fisher, (phone) CLC; Youngjin Jung, CLC; Vanessa Hackett, (phone) CLC; James Keeney, CLC; Joe Lillis, CLC; Richard Fox, CLC; P. M. Scarlet Ford, CLC; Robert Timmerman, CLC; Valeda Britton, Executive Director, Community Relations/MED, BU; Jake Sullivan, AVP Government & Community Affairs/BU CRC; Dr. Ronald Corley, BU Department of Microbiology, Director, NEIDL

Meeting opened at 6:35 pm by Ms. Britton.

Committee Review of Notes from CLC Meeting on March 12, 2018

Government & Community Affairs Update:

Community Relations mentioned that scholarships were granted to six high school students to attend The Citylab Biotechnology SummerLab on the BU Medical Campus. This program provides students with hands-on experience to develop a deeper understanding of basic techniques and concepts related to DNA science.

It was announced that on June 20th twenty-nine high school students will receive Menino Scholars awards. Over the next four years, this group will receive more than \$6 million in scholarship funds from Boston University. This year Boston University also recognized 37 Community Service Award winners who represent a commitment of \$6.5 million from BU over the next four years. Winners of the Community Service Awards receive grants to fully fund their financial need without loans. They are provided with a mentor to assist them in a successful transition to the University and are connected to campus resources including community service opportunities.

Ms. Britton reported that July will be a busy month at the NEIDL as there are a large number of high school students touring the facility. New City Councilors have received invitations to tour the NEIDL as well.

Ms. Britton reminded the CLC that the BU Institutional Biosafety Committee (IBC) has begun looking for additional community members to sit on the IBC. She requested any interested CLC members to shoot her an email.

NEIDL Update from Dr. Corley:

Dr. Corley started with a quiz and discussion on emerging and reemerging infectious diseases. These diseases seem to be occurring on an accelerated basis.

Since 2015, there have been at least two outbreaks of Ebola in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Those considered at high risk of the disease including health care workers and first responders are being immunized with an experimental vaccine for Zaire Ebola. This is the first time such treatments have been available in the midst of an outbreak.

So far in 2018, there have been no local mosquito borne Zika virus transmissions in the continental U.S. Tuberculosis continues to be a public health challenge globally. One in four people are infected. There is always a risk that those who have latent TB infection (asymptomatic) develop active TB at a later time.

Other viruses of concern are those emerging from Southeast Asia such as Hendra and Nipah. The hosts for these viruses are fruit bats of the flying fox species. Hendra first emerged in Australia and infected horses that then infected people. A vaccine for horses has been developed that has the potential to break the transmission of this disease to humans.

On the other hand, there is no vaccine to prevent Nipah. Originally, Nipah caused an outbreak of encephalitis and lung problems among pig farmers in Malaysia. Many pigs were killed. Since then, there have been no reported cases of Nipah in Malaysia. However, because the flying foxes have the ability to fly long distances, outbreaks of Nipah have occurred on a regular basis in both Bangladesh and India due to contact with infected bats, pigs humans, and palm sap.

Wild polio virus has been reported in Pakistan due to changes to the polio vaccine. It is endemic in Pakistan and a few other countries. Polio infects only humans through person to person contact. Polio has been eliminated in the United States due to widespread vaccination efforts.

Last, but not least and of great public health concern is microbial resistant bacteria. Recently, BU was given a large grant to oversee Combating Antibiotic Resistant Bacteria Biopharmaceutical Accelerator (CARB-X) which involves public and private partnerships working to accelerate the development of new antibiotics, and diagnostics aimed at drug resistant superbugs.

Dr Corley then gave an update on NEIDL operations and research. After giving notice to the Boston Public Health Commission and the City Council, we will begin bringing in new viruses shortly. Also, he reminded the group that due to key safety staff members leaving for opportunities elsewhere, it was decided by BU that BSL-4 research would not begin nor would pathogens be ordered until experienced and qualified staff were employed to fill these positions. He announced that recruitment efforts at the NEIDL have been successful. Two researchers with BSL-4 expertise have been hired. They are from the Texas Biomedical Research Institute, an independent, non- profit biomedical research institution in San Antonio. Two new Safety Officers have also been hired. Both have extensive experience, one at BSL-3 and the other at BSL-4.

The CDC came to visit and inspected the BSL-3 labs. They made some minor observations and findings which have been implemented. The CDC will inspect the BSL-4 labs at some point after research begins at that level.

Next CLC Meeting:

September 2018

Meeting Adjourned