

Boston University Medical Campus

Community Liaison Committee (CLC)

National Emerging Infectious Diseases Laboratories (NEIDL)

MEETING NOTES

Monday June 15, 2020

11:00 am. * Zoom

ATTENDING

J. Kevin Fisher, CLC; Jean Lee, CLC; Joe Lillis, CLC; Vanessa Hackett, CLC; Kenneth Nwosu, CLC; Jim Keeney, CLC; Robert Timmerman, CLC; David Opp, CLC; Valeda Britton, GCA, BU; Chimel Idiokitas, GCA, BU; Erika Curry, GCA, BU; Elizabeth Leary, GCA, BU; James Curley, GCA, BU; Cecilia Nardi, GCA, BU; Dr. Ronald Corley, Director, NEIDL

Meeting opened at 11:05am

NEIDL Director Update by Dr. Ron Corley:

Dr. Corley noted that Covid-19 cases are going down in Massachusetts due to the City and State being responsive and responsible for the safety of its citizens. This has not been the case in 20 other states where Covid-19 numbers are increasing. While some experts believed that COVID - 19 would vanish once temperatures increased, that has not been the case thus far. We do not know yet if Covid -19 will spike because of the demonstrations either, but we are concerned.

Dr. Corley believes that the virus will be around for a continued period of time, until either we reach herd immunity, where more people are infected and recover or everyone is vaccinated. We may begin to see annual vaccines being given, like influenza, because there is no knowledge of what antibodies are needed for immunity.

Dr. Corley noted that the majority of the RBL and NBL facilities that are part of our network are studying SARS-CoV-2. In addition, most of the faculty members in the NEIDL are currently doing research with SARS-CoV-2 at the moment. The NEIDL started this research at BSL-4 because these laboratories were already set up. Our active BSL-3 labs were working on TB and West Nile Virus only. Now all BSL-3 laboratories except for 1 is being utilized for COVID-19 research and the NEIDL has been operating 24/7 for the last couple of months. Dr. Corley thanked the BBC and the BPHC for their timely reviews of SARS CoV-2/Covid-19 protocols and amendments, especially since they are also trying to respond to the Covid-19 pandemic and protect the City at the same time.

There are 10 companies that are actively making vaccines using nucleic acids, viral vectors, recombinant DNA, animal and human studies. There are real ethical concerns with human challenge studies. Other vaccine candidates are also being tested. Dr. Corley stated that the

popular drug Remdesivir has not decreased the mortality rate in infected patients. People do seem to have a speedier recovery, but this drug will probably need to be used in combination with other drugs. For the meanwhile, he believes it is a placeholder therapeutic until a widespread vaccine is approved.

Dr Davey is continuing to test therapeutic candidates and has tested thousands to date. Some have had an impact on Covid -19 cells. The use of Ivermectin in clinical trials to treat SARS CoV-2, while FDA approved, needs more research. Dr. Griffiths is studying stool samples to examine the shedding of the virus in fecal material. There are 10 other approaches being tested in clinical trials. However, further development and research will take time.

Dr Corley emphasized that scientists do not believe SARS CoV-2 was manufactured. It is thought that a bat virus infected a pangolin and the virus passed from a pangolin to a human. It was noted that within a few days of the announcement of the pathogen, China had put the completed sequence online to share with the world. Because Beijing is experiencing a new outbreak now, and because of the political pressures that they are facing, they may be reticent to share further information.

It was mentioned that the DRC is currently experiencing another ebola outbreak. This virus is slightly different from the last. Containing the outbreak along with rising COVID-19 cases in African countries have been difficult for health care workers in the country. Even more troublesome, this means that routine vaccinations for children such as the measles vaccine is being neglected. Measles is highly contagious and can kill both adults and children, if left unchecked.

With these developments occurring globally, Dr. Corley believes that reducing funding for the World Health Organization (WHO) is a significant error. WHO is the one organization that works in countries around the world, investigating outbreaks and bringing healthcare to these countries. It has the ability to mobilize healthcare and workers to address public health concerns globally.

Meeting adjourned