

# Boston University Medical Campus

---

## Community Liaison Committee (CLC)

National Emerging Infectious Diseases Laboratories (NEIDL)

---

### MEETING NOTES

Wednesday September 15, 2021

4:00 pm. \* Zoom

#### Attending

Joe Lillis, CLC; Jean Lee, CLC; J. Kevin Fisher, CLC; Robert Timmerman, CLC; Jim Keeney, CLC; Norm Stembridge, CLC; Olawumi Akinwumi, CLC; Chimel Idiokitas, Director, Community Outreach, BU; Valeda Britton, Executive Director, Community Relations/MED, BU; Elizabeth Leary, Executive Director, Government & Community Affairs; Dr. Nahid Bhadelia, Founding Director, CEID, BU; Dr. Ronald Corley, BU Department of Microbiology, Director, NEIDL

#### Welcome

Dr. Ron Corley introduced Dr. Nahid Bhadelia to the CLC. Dr. Bhadelia is the Founding Director of the BU Center for Emerging Infectious Diseases Policy and Research (CEID). She is an Associate Professor of Medicine in the Infectious Diseases Section. In her over 11 years at the NEIDL, she has been actively involved in the medical response program for the BSL-4 laboratories, is the Director of the Special Pathogens Unit at BMC and established CEID to connect policy and its implications to science and preparedness.

#### Presentation: "CEID...Why it Matters."

The CEID is housed in the NEIDL and is closely aligned with the NEIDL's mission. The CEID will determine the "how" to respond to these emerging infectious disease threats. While part of the NEIDL's mission is to discover diagnostics, vaccines and treatments for emerging infectious diseases.

According to Dr. Bhadelia, the four (4) inaugural themes that will drive CEID's work are governance, community resilience and health equity, innovation and new technology (GRIT). The desire is to wed expertise, and data in emerging infectious diseases to policy research in an effort to help communities, and governments anticipate, prepare and respond to emerging infectious diseases. CEID envisions that research, global and local capacity strengthening, advocacy and training can improve societal resilience against the threat of emerging, and epidemic infectious diseases worldwide. Thus, the Center's preliminary projects and activities will focus on community and health system resilience, responsible and responsive governance, combating disinformation, improving trust, community participation and education, and driving and adapting social and technical innovation.

On the global front, she mentioned the important work of COVAX, which is a global collaboration to accelerate the development, production, and equitable access to COVID-19

tests, treatments, and vaccines. COVAX is co-led by Gavi, the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (CEPI) and WHO. Despite this dedicated partnership, the real question is when will Covid-19 vaccines be widely available worldwide given the real-world challenges faced such as nationalism, lack of adequate funding, export control, competition for purchase with high income countries, getting vaccines to the last mile, and vaccine hesitancy.

Yet, vaccines are only part of the solution. Health equity is at the core of Dr. Bhadelia's work. She believes that a "Science only" approach doesn't work in a global world. In national and global settings where vaccines are non-accessible due to varying factors, it becomes even more daunting to identify, respond and control emerging pathogens. The questions that need to be addressed are more than economic, political and cultural ones, but CEID and its multidisciplinary collaborators are eager to take on the challenge.

#### **NEIDL Director Update by Dr. Ron Corley:**

Dr. Corley mentioned that last year at this time, the NEIDL was studying SARS CoV-2. Now we are researching other pathogens such as Ebola, and Marburg. Guinea recently had a Marburg outbreak. Marburg has never been seen in Guinea before. However, due to the knowledge and experience gained with treating Ebola, measures were put in place to mitigate risk by doing contact tracing and quarantines. For the 3rd time in 2 years, there has been a Nipah virus outbreak in Southwest India. Nipah is the pathogen that the movie Contagion was modeled after. It is spread from person to person, and kills a high percentage of people who are infected.

Because of masking in 2020, there were few cases of Flu or Respiratory syncytial virus (RSV). However, RSV cases are rising in the U.S. both for newborns and the elderly. NEIDL investigator, Dr. Rachel Fearn is an expert in RSV, and has been doing research to discover effective therapeutics for RSV. Yet, to date, no vaccine or therapeutics have been found

#### **Government & Community Affairs (GCA) Updates:**

Ms. Britton updated the CLC on the upcoming Speaker Series at MATCH High School. The series will feature various BU professionals from the NEIDL and other departments within the University. Sessions will be held every third Wednesday either in person or zoom with a group of sophomores from MATCH. Community Relations will also work with Madison Park High School, who now has a new Executive Director, to develop a program around job readiness in STEM.

Ms. Britton also announced the NEIDL's annual meeting, which will be held on Wednesday, Nov. 17th at 6pm on zoom.

**Meeting adjourned**