

Boston University Medical Campus

Community Liaison Committee (CLC)

National Emerging Infectious Diseases Laboratories (NEIDL)

MEETING NOTES

Wednesday April 13, 2022

4:00 pm. * Zoom

Attending

Jean Lee, CLC; J. Kevin Fisher, CLC; Norm Stemberger, CLC; Vanessa Hackett, CLC; Olawumi Akinwumi, CLC; Chimele Idiokitas, Director, Community Outreach, BU; Valeda Britton, Executive Director, Community Relations/MED, BU; Elizabeth Leary, Executive Director, Government & Community Affairs; Dr. Ronald Corley, BU Department of Microbiology, Director, NEIDL; Dr. Steve Niemi, Attending Veterinarian and Director of BU Animal Science Center; Stephen Taranto, Director of Public Safety, NEIDL; Lora Forman, NEIDL

Welcome

Ms. Britton opened the meeting. Dr. Corley introduced Dr. Steve Niemi who gave a presentation on Animal Research at BU. Dr. Niemi is the Director of the Animal Science Center on both campuses and in charge of Animal Research Services at the NEIDL.

Presentation: "Animal Research at BU"

There are a number of animal facilities on both campuses and research covers a variety of different species, including mice, rats, zebrafish, frogs, monkeys, and birds. As a lab animal vet, he is trained to know the biology, husbandry, and natural diseases of these and other animals. Each research institution in the US using animals must have at least one lab animal vet available that is responsible for the well-being and clinical care of animals used there. He said that it is important that research occurs and that animals are treated humanely.

Since high quality research is part of advancing human health, animal research is important toward our efforts to understand human diseases that have no cures or treatments, such as Alzheimer's and Huntington's. Further, the FDA Animal Rule supports drug and vaccine research and development when human clinical trials are not ethical or feasible. For example, zebrafish have many similarities to human biology. Research with them may be used to see how tumors grow after chemotherapy or to explore how medication impacts their heart muscle cells. The goal of this research is to improve patient's lives.

After 911 and the Anthrax scare in the Senate in 2001, the federal government realized that it was not prepared for natural disasters or bioterror events. Since one of the goals of the NEIDL mission is to develop novel drugs and biologic candidates not tested in humans, having Animal Research Services with its two vets and 17 vet techs involved in research at ABSL 2/3/4 animal facilities located at the NEIDL is necessary.

Dr. Niemi mentioned that there are multiple agencies that oversee animal research at the Federal and State levels. The U.S.D.A. regulates the treatment of animals used in research under the Animal Welfare Act, (AWA) adopted in 1966. The AWA was enacted after pet dogs and cats were found to be stolen from their homes and sold to labs. Its provisions are applicable to dogs, cats and monkeys. However, if federal funding is received, institutions must comply with the NIH's Office of Lab Animal Welfare (OLAW) which regulates the treatment of all vertebrae animal species, including rats, mice, birds, fish and amphibians. In Massachusetts an application and license from the Commissioner of Public Health is required before research can be undertaken on cats and dogs. Both the MSPCA and the Animal Rescue League are empowered to act as agents for the Commonwealth and may visit and inspect animal research and care facilities in connection with licensure issued by the Public Health Department.BU does not use cats and dogs in research at this time, so it is not subject to this state law.

At BU the Institutional Animal Care & Use Committee (IACUC) oversees and evaluates the animal care & use program. Any study involving animals must be approved by IACUC before research is started. If the protocol is changed or amended, it must be approved by IACUC first. Inspections and review of space and policies are conducted by the IACUC at least every 6 months. IACUC approval of a protocol is valid for 3 years. Under both USDA and OLAW regulations, IACUC may have at least 3-5 members, including at least one community (non-affiliated) member.

Public Safety Update

Ms.Britton introduced Stephen Taranto, Director of Public Safety, BU Medical Campus. Mr. Taranto has been in law enforcement for over 40 years. He is also a senior instructor for the State's Police Training Academy. He gave a brief talk about NEIDL's public safety role both inside and outside the NEIDL facility. He noted that his officers are dedicated to the NEIDL, are State Academy Trained and are available at the NEIDL 24/7.

Government & Community Affairs (GCA) Updates:

Ms . Britton updated the group on the NBL-RBL Networking Meeting which went well, and welcomed over 100 visitors from various research labs throughout the country. This networking group meets annually and is a great way to meet colleagues and peers to learn and discuss best practices. Dr. Corley thanked Valeda for her assistance. Next year's conference will take place in UTMB, Galveston, TX.

Other Topics:

Next meeting – NEIDL Annual Meeting: June 15, 2022

Meeting adjourned