

Boston University Medical Campus

National Emerging Infectious Diseases Laboratories (NEIDL)

Community Liaison Committee

Wednesday, June 15, 2022

4pm Zoom

Meeting Notes

Attending:

Jean Lee, CLC; J. Kevin Fisher, CLC; Olawumi Akinwumi, CLC; Nefertiti Lawrence, CLC; James Keeney, CLC; Lora Forman, NEIDL; Valeda Britton, Executive Director, Community Relations/MED, BU; Elizabeth Leary, Executive Director, Government & Community Affairs; Dr. Ronald Corley, BU Department of Microbiology, Director, NEIDL; John H. McCall, Director Information Technology & Telecommunications, NEIDL;

Welcome & Introduction- Dr. Corley

Ms. Britton opened the meeting. Dr. Corley mentioned that we were looking for a few schools /organizations to donate 10-15 compound microscopes. He then introduced Mr. John McCall

PRESENTATION: NEIDL IT AND AUDITS: Mr. John McCall

Mr. McCall is Director of NEIDL IT, and together with Ben Slutsky make up the NEIDL IT Group. While IT services in the NEIDL are supported and complimented by a large BU Information Services and Technology Team, the dedicated NEIDL IT Group coordinates, facilitates, manages and maintains services to support the research and operational requirements of the NEIDL. They are responsible for management and maintenance of computing devices, network systems, telephone, voicemail, video conferencing, and software application development. To this end, they partner closely and have proactive dialogues with NEIDL professionals to ensure that research and technology needs are being met. The NEIDL IT Group is even trained to work in the containment facilities.

Because safety and security are of utmost importance at the NEIDL, IT staff manages building automation and select agent inventory control for a safe and secure network environment. State of-the-art technology is used to safeguard the facility against human and natural hazards. Regular backups provide protection against hardware and software failures. NEIDL systems are protected by a firewall which blocks potential attackers, prevents denial of service attacks and malicious remote connections, blocks staff from downloading malware, and blocks access to sites that facilitate phishing attacks. Industry standard best practices are employed and continually reevaluated to reduce the risk of natural technology failures and cybersecurity threats..

However, even the most up to date and sophisticated systems and practices require vigilance. Regular internal and external audits of the NEIDL's IT systems and policies are conducted, which verify intended practices and serve as a tool to proactively identify improvements. External audits have often resulted in NEIDL IT Group being asked to be consultants in redesigning other networks. Our most recent audit

occurred in late 2021. While audits always show areas for improvement, McCall said they have been pleased with the audit results.

He noted that one of the concerns for the NEIDL and BU IT campuswide is “phishing” in the form of emails for journals requests, and bogus conference invitations. However, at the end of the day, NEIDL IT is protective and proud of its ability to keep the building and its research safe and supported.

NEIDL DIRECTOR UPDATES; Dr. Ronald Corley

Dr. Corley gave an overview of monkeypox. He mentioned that Dr. Connor has received clinical sample isolates from a MGH patient and the NEIDL is working to build its portfolio of infectious diseases. The MGH patient appears to have recovered. The Monkeypox is in the same viral family as smallpox. There are two clades of the virus in Africa , the Central African (Congo Basin) and the Western African clade. The Central African Clade has a higher mortality rate, but the virus that is spreading is the West African Clade. Symptoms include, fever, chills , rashes and swollen lymph nodes. Once identified, isolation and quarantine are recommended because the disease generally self -resolves. However, monkeypox does respond to antivirals and vaccines which have been slow to be rolled out to try to help control the outbreak.

Dr Corley also noted that people are coming down with the Flu and RSV now that we are no longer wearing masks, but why we are seeing these diseases in the Summer is strange as we usually see these diseases in the Fall and Winter. Dr. Corley also said that we are seeing mosquitos moving north and other vectors like ticks are spreading as well. Query-is climate change responsible for this?

GOVERNMENT & COMMUNITY AFFAIRS (GCA) UPDATES:

Ms Britton discussed the CLC survey to be sent along to members as well as a job description for Mr. Idiokitas' position. She encouraged CLC members to return the completed survey and send any recommendation for candidates to her.

Next meeting is September 21, 2022 via Zoom.