

HISAR SCHOOL

JUNIOR MODEL UNITED NATIONS 2021

“Combating Polarization in Times of Global Crisis”

SA3 - Health

Establishing precautionary plans for possible epidemics

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Forum: Special Assembly of Health (SA-3)

Issue: Establishing Precautionary Plans for Possible Epidemics

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Introduction

One thing that COVID-19 has proven is that the world has severely neglected to plan for the possibility of epidemics. The 2021 Global Health Security Index states that there are no countries that are fully prepared for the event of an epidemic. It is the responsibility of the government to plan for such emergencies as well as act imminently in the face of one.

Preventing epidemics and establishing precautionary measures can be separated into two categories. Preparedness of the country, and their capacity to respond to threats. The country must be prepared for the event of an epidemic; this includes an adequate workforce, awareness of communities, and the systems in place to detect and define epidemics. Capacity is the resources a country must have to effectively respond to an epidemic threat. This refers to the adequate financial resources and planning, trained workforce and any mechanical materials that would be required in the event of an epidemic.

Definition of Key Terms

Epidemic and Pandemic: Epidemics are infectious diseases that are spread in a community. Pandemics are developed epidemics, in which they become worldwide issues. Epidemics must be prevented from spreading enough to become pandemics.

Infectious Disease: Diseases that are transmitted by one person to another. This could be by bodily fluids like blood; which is seen in diseases such as HIV/AIDS. The transmission could be airborne, meaning it would be transmitted by the air. These diseases are highly contagious because being in the same room as a patient could result in an infection. COVID-19 is a great example of airborne diseases.

Global Health Security Index: The Johns Hopkins Center for Health Security, the Nuclear Threat Initiative, and the Economist Intelligence Unit created the Global Health Security Index to analyze global health security capabilities in 195 countries.

General Overview

It is important to understand how epidemics begin and develop to effectively prevent them and eliminate them from spreading. The introduction and emergence of transmittable diseases cannot be prevented, however, at this stage; it is easily preventable from becoming an epidemic. Early detection is crucial to

prevent diseases from becoming epidemics, as it makes it easier to contain the diseases. Healthcare workers are responsible for realizing the signs of any unusual diseases and reporting the possibility of contagious diseases. They must work in coordination with effective protection methods, and detect the diseases as soon as possible. Unless the disease can be contained at this stage, it turns into an epidemic.

There has to be certain systems in place to prevent epidemics. The most basic part of preventing epidemics is the country's ability to find disease outbreaks quickly. The more time passes after a disease has emerged, the harder it will be to contain the disease. Moreover, the diseases must be identified as soon as they present themselves to raise awareness on protection, create and/or distribute vaccines and medicine. Therefore, countries need to have national laboratory systems that can detect and identify diseases.

An adequate workforce to prevent epidemics plays a huge role in eliminating the risk of epidemics. Every country must have a capable and well-trained workforce to find and stop breakouts. Countries must have done risk assessment and planning before any epidemics arise, and have the necessary emergency response operations in place. Whether these operations are agreements for emergency systems with healthcare providers, or training operators in effectively handling a break-out, the countries must be prepared for such emergencies.

Countries have to individually work on themselves, and their legislations; as well as contribute to international corporations to share information. Countries must have legislations, regulations and policies in place for the possibility of an epidemic. Moreover, countries should be financially prepared for the event of an epidemic. The major thing that COVID-19 has proven is that most countries such as LEDCs are not financially prepared or stable enough to survive an epidemic. Epidemics can reveal critical wealth gaps, and primarily affect the financially unstable. Governments should have financial precautionary measures in place both for the low-income citizens and the healthcare system.

There has to be international cooperation to eliminate the risk that comes with the lack of knowledge. Countries must exchange information and risk assessments, as epidemics can easily develop into pandemics; and shortening the time spent on information collection could potentially save lives. Moreover, there should be effective communication between experts and doctors with the community to prevent the spread of misinformation among citizens. The public must take precautionary measures themselves to curb the spread of diseases.

Major Parties Involved and Their Views

Somalia: Somalia has ranked the lowest overall in research done by The Global Health and Security Index about epidemic preparedness. Multiple studies show that Somalia is not ready for an epidemic, and could potentially face destruction in the event of one. While they have real-time surveillance and medical countermeasures, they severely lack in the financial aspect, emergency response, antimicrobial assistance

and food safety. While the country has shown their intentions of preparing better, they still have a lot of work to do.

Canada: Canada is a very well-prepared country for the threat of an epidemic. While overall, they lack antimicrobial resistance; they have a very comprehensive plan for any potential epidemics. They are a high-income country, so the funding for any plans are not a huge issue. With the community and citizens also aware; Canada is a country to take an example of.

World Health Organisation (WHO): Based in Geneva, Switzerland, World Health Organisation is a United Nations agency responsible for global health. They gather information and produce guidelines for countries to follow as well as offer advice and funding for countries. WHO has released a 52-page guideline on epidemic preparedness, and has been the most reliable source regarding epidemics and COVID-19.

Timeline of Events

Date of Event	<i>Description of Event</i>
the 1350s	<i>The Bubonic Plague, also known as The Black Death is spread</i>
1817	<i>First Cholera Outbreak</i>
1918	<i>The Spanish Flu Outbreak</i>
1981	<i>HIV/AIDS Outbreak</i>
16 November 2002	<i>Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) Outbreak</i>
2005	<i>International Health Regulations (IHR) was published</i>
April 2009	<i>The Influenza Type A Virus, also known as H1N1, was recognized.</i>
17 November 2019	<i>First confirmed case of the COVID-19 Outbreak</i>

Treaties and Events

International Health Regulations

International Health Regulation (IHR) is a legally binding international agreement that is considered to be international law. IHR intends to raise international collaboration on health issues. The IHR defines their goal as “to prevent, protect against, control, and provide a public health response to the international spread of disease...”

The Global Outbreak Alert and Response Network

Global Outbreak Alert and Response Network (GOARN) is an international organization under the supervision of WHO. This network provides resources to countries that are affected by epidemics. These resources include healthcare staff, medical equipment, and even financial funding.

Evaluation of Previous Attempts to Resolve the Issue

While many countries have tried to come up with adequate plans, according to the Global Health and Security Index, there are no countries fully prepared to face an epidemic. There have been international treaties to increase and encourage collaboration, however, in times of crisis it has been proven again and again that countries would prioritize their economic well-being over another country’s humanitarian crisis.

Possible Solutions

Delegates must view the situation as a whole and come up with solutions that are comprehensive. The issue, while at its core is legislative, has social and economic impacts, and will not be applicable to most countries if the solutions aren’t cost-effective.

There have to be international treaties that prohibit member states from keeping vital information to themselves and encourage international cooperation by means of exchanging information and supplying medical equipment if necessary.

The Member States must be encouraged to come up with these plans as soon as possible. The lack of such plans threatens the integrity of any country. The plans should address problems such as supplying medical equipment, financial instability and wrongful allocations of funding, training adequate health care workers, and raising awareness in communities.

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