

A growing global network's role in outbreak response: AFHSC-GEIS 2008-2009

Abstract:

A cornerstone of effective disease surveillance programs comprises the early identification of infectious threats and the subsequent rapid response to prevent further spread. Effectively identifying, tracking and responding to these threats is often difficult and requires international cooperation due to the rapidity with which diseases cross national borders and spread throughout the global community as a result of travel and migration by humans and animals. From Oct. 1, 2008 to Sept. 30, 2009, the United States Department of Defense's (DoD) Armed Forces Health Surveillance Center Global Emerging Infections Surveillance and Response System (AFHSC-GEIS) identified 76 outbreaks in 53 countries. Emerging infectious disease outbreaks were identified by the global network and included a wide spectrum of support activities in collaboration with host country partners, several of which were in direct support of the World Health Organization's (WHO) International Health Regulations (IHR) (2005). The network also supported military forces around the world affected by the novel influenza A/H1N1 pandemic of 2009. With IHR (2005) as the guiding framework for action, the AFHSC-GEIS network of international partners and overseas research laboratories continues to develop into a far-reaching system for identifying, analyzing and responding to emerging disease threats.