A Needed Competency Finding and Using Authoritative Disaster Health Information

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A Needed Competency: Finding and Using Authoritative Disaster Health Information Resources

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Objectives

1. List benefits of being able to proficiently use authoritative disaster health information resources
2. Compare key resources
3. Describe training efforts and learning opportunities on disaster health information

Background

Responders returning from the Haiti earthquake reported that, although they needed health information, it was hard to obtain. Obstacles included inconsistent Web connections, limited printed resources, no time to sift between relevant and useless information, and of most concern, lack of awareness of relevant disaster health information resources. However delayed access to medical information can result in increased post-disaster morbidity and mortality.

Yet, there exist authoritative resources from the National Library of Medicine including PubMed, PubMed Clinical Queries, WISER, REMM, CHEMM, ToxNet, MedlinePlus, the Emergency Access Initiative, and more, as described to the right.

A review of online disaster/emergency courses did not reveal any courses that provided concise training on such authoritative disaster health information resources.

Methods

The University of Miami, partnering with the Florida Department of Health in Miami-Dade County, was funded by the National Network of Libraries of Medicine Southeastern/Atlantic to develop continuing education covering these topics and more. Needs assessments and a focus group were conducted and an advisory group was formed. Two face-to-face classes and one online class were developed to present the resources described to the right.

Classes were promoted to public health workers, first responders, and MRC volunteers, and taught by medical librarians.

Results

43 people completed the needs assessments for both classes. Most (54%) were health practitioners, followed by public health workers and disaster response administrators. 39.5% had experience in the field. Of those, 31.25% had access to a computer when they were in the field and 60% had access to mobile devices. Respondents were interested in learning about all topics but slightly less interested in learning about consumer health resources. To date, 45 people have completed training.

Resources Taught

http://www.nlm.nih.gov/mobile/

More Results

Of those responding, 100% agreed that having a disaster health information librarian or specialist would be valuable. Only 35% said they knew an individual to contact.

• Initial pre and posttests showed room for improvement so content was revised.
• Of those responding, 99% agreed the class met all objectives.
• Of those responding, 100% said they would recommend the class to a colleague.

Conclusion

Authoritative disaster health information resources may be underutilized in the field because responders do not know a disaster health information specialist or librarian to contact. These classes raised awareness of authoritative National Library of Medicine resources, so disaster health information resources may be more likely to be used at the time of need.

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