

CDC – PCC Bioterrorism Preparedness Developmental Workshop, Palau 21 October – 1 November 2002

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After September 11 2001, U.S. federal funding for bioterrorism (BT) has been made available through a Cooperative Agreement process through the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) for the U.S.-associated Pacific Islands (USAPI) – American Samoa, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, Guam, Federated States of Micronesia, Republic of the Marshall Islands, and the Republic of Palau. The Cooperative Agreements include the development of critical benchmarks designed to increase the capacity of the USAPI so that they can deal with BT and other public health emergencies in their islands.

To this end CDC's Pacific Emergency Health Initiative (see other related articles this issue) and Palau Community College through PCC's Pacific Emergency Health Center (see related article this issue) convened this Bioterrorism Preparedness Developmental Workshop in Palau, to train BT Coordinators from each USAPI to better prepare for BT events and other public health emergencies. Other participants included the Coordinators for EpiNet an electronic epidemiology surveillance network created and managed by the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC).

CDC consultants - all from Atlanta, Georgia - included personnel from PEHI, the National Pharmaceutical Stockpile, Health Alert Network, BT Epidemiology Service, and BT Laboratory Services. Other consultants included a representative from the Hospital Preparedness Program, Health resources & Services Administration, DHHS, and from other regional organizations included SPC, the World Health Organization (Suva), American Red Cross (CNMI), Palau Chapter of the Red Cross, Hawaii State Department of Health. Other sponsors of the Workshop included the Pacific Island Health Officers Association (the executives in health from the USAPI) and the Republic of Palau Ministries of Health and Justice.

Opening remarks for the Workshop were presented by the Honorable Sandra Pierantozzi, Vice President and Minister of Health, Republic of Palau, and Michael Rosenthal, Minister of Justice, ROP. Vice President Pierantozzi reminded the audience of the many common disasters in the region (dengue fever epidemics, typhoons, earthquakes) and that the terrorism events in Bali and the Philippines were not far away (see speech this issue). Minister Rosenthal exhorted the Workshop participants to be prepared for all emergencies.

Week 1 of the training (October 21–25, 2002) included open sessions on BT and other public health emergencies common in the region. Besides the BT and EpiNet Coordinators, other participants included local fire and police personnel from the Palau Ministry of Justice, the AHEC Family Practice Residents (see related article), and PCC students. Week 2 (October 28 –1 November) of the training was a closed planning workshop for the BT and EpiNet Coordinators to further implement the CDC Cooperative Agreement.

A recurring theme of the Workshop was also that in preparing for common daily emergencies this would prepare the way to addressing BT and other more common public health emergencies in the region.

For more information regarding the CDC BT training please contact *Dr. Mark Keim*, CDC at mjk9@cdc.gov.

For information regarding the PIHOA-CDC Cooperative Agreement for the USAPI, please contact *Dr. Robert Tucker*, Executive Director, PIHOA at pihoa@hawaii.org. See papers in this issue for details. ■

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