

An Innovative Risk-Based Approach for Effective Management of Emerging Infectious Diseases in an Academic Medical Centre

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Background

- Emerging new and existing infections pose a risk to both our patients and staff. Spread of infections within the hospital setting is a real threat, contributes to significant morbidity and is potentially preventable. Infectious outbreaks could be small and discrete, and managed at ward level, or large enough to affect multiple wards requiring massive containment, mitigation and communication measures. To tackle this, National University Hospital, Singapore, formed the CEO's Planning Guidance (CPG) committee to set guidelines for risk categorization, escalation and to ensure timely monitoring, medical and operational responses.

Aim

- Implementation of a risk management system (CPG) to provide structured medical and operational response plans in infectious disease outbreaks.

Actions Taken

- In 2017, the hospital leadership introduced a structured and risk-based approach for managing infectious outbreaks.
- The CPG team comprised heads / representatives from Operations, Human Resource, Corporate Communications, Finance, Laboratory Medicine, Epidemiology and Infectious Disease divisions.
- The ID team continued to closely monitor epidemiologic data in order to identify outbreaks early.
- Such surveillance forms a critical component of the process.
- Examples of types of infections dealt with included TB, varicella, measles, flu outbreaks.
- The Infectious Disease and Clinical Department Heads were given clear guidelines on timelines for escalation to senior management and requisite medical, operational and communication responses.
- An Operations Command Centre provided resources to facilitate, implement, monitor and follow-up.

Results

- The establishment of CPG allowed the hospital to put in place a robust and comprehensive management response to infectious disease outbreaks in both emergent and non-emergent situations.
- In all incidents, the intent is to enable early containment of problem, without disrupting smooth functioning of hospital operations.
- Clear roles and responsibility for all staff involved provide accountability in ensuring a safe environment for our patients and staff.