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Joint Investigation



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Purpose of Briefing

To present recommendations on joint public health (PH) and law enforcement (LE) investigations and interview guidelines.



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Joining forces: Benefits

To LE

To PH

- Access to infectious disease subject matter experts
 - Access to relevant medical/health information
 - Combines two interviews into one
- Access to case information (i.e. location of release, dispersal device used, targeted victims)
 - Assisting apprehension of suspect(s), therefore minimize/prevent future exposure



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Where to start?

- Agree to work together
- Joint Protocols
 - Notification
 - Threat Assessment
- Joint Interview



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Notification is Critical!

LE Notification to PH:

- Intelligence or investigative information of a credible threat
- Require PH subject matter expertise for

- Threat assessment
- Sample collection/analysis



PH Notification to LE:

- Laboratory confirmed positive of BT agent (i.e. anthrax, smallpox, plague)
- Unusual disease pattern or cluster
- High value targets (i.e. politicians, activists)





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Notification/Assessment

Mechanism should be established to notify and evaluate local public health/medical intelligence information between LE and PH, and to assess the credibility of potential bioterrorism threats.





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Guidelines for Initiating a Joint Investigation

- Work with local Public Health agencies to agree on criteria for initiating joint interviews and joint investigations
- Take into consideration State and local laws and Privacy rules related to patient confidentiality



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Criteria for Initiating a Joint Investigation

- Presumptive lab tests are positive for an agent
 - Natural exposure is unlikely
 - No known risk factors for disease occurrence
 - LE intelligence or information suggest bioterrorism tie
- AND
- All facts presented leads health official to a reasonable medical belief based on the disease and surrounding circumstances that it was intentionally caused



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Joint Investigation Actions

- Situation meets a threshold of “Credible Threat”
 - LE and PH initiate joint investigation
 - LE and PH command posts stood up and liaisons from each agency are assigned to ensure information is shared appropriately
 - LE and PH send out joint interview teams to conduct interviews of patients



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Joint Interview

- Purpose: To determine where and when exposures to bioterrorism agents may have occurred



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Benefit of Joint Interviews

- Both agencies can make use of all pertinent information that could help them to accomplish their respective goals
- Minimizes disruption/stress to patient by reducing number of interviews conducted
- If interviews are conducted separately, LE or PH may not understand relevance of collected information to the other agency



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Joint Interviews





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Conduct Joint Planning Meeting or Conference Call

Prior to conducting the interviews of patients,

- Convene a meeting/conference call for all investigators
 - Briefing on the current investigation
 - Information on the disease agent
 - Appropriate PPE levels
 - Prophylaxis
 - Given interview collection tool
 - Communication method will be discussed
 - Question and answer period



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Briefing (Continued)

- LE will conduct standard background checks on patient and contacts and will share relevant information with PH
 - Intelligence
 - Criminal history



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Onsite Staging Operations

- Onsite interview team meeting
 - Prior to entering hospital/clinic
 - Review interview strategy
 - Designate a site outside the hospital to meet in case PH and LE interviewers are separated



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Introduction of Hospital Staff

- Introduction to Hospital Administrator
- Meet with Attending Physician or Infection Control Practitioner
 - PH explains the purpose of the interview and LE presence to the physician
 - Ascertain patient admission information
 - Request background information on the patient's case
 - Obtain any relevant information that may facilitate the interview process
 - Ask physician to make introductions to the patient



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Interview

- Patient medical needs take priority over the interview (patient might be very ill)
- Joint interview team should be sensitive to patient's concerns and needs
- Minimize patient stress by sitting
- Wear appropriate PPE



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The Interview

- PH will:
 - Introduce the interview team
 - Explain the purpose of the interview
 - The reason for LE presence



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Interview

- PH

Public Health will gather two types of data

- Personal Medical Information (e.g. HIV/AIDS status, past medical history, substance abuse history, radiographic reports)

- **Gathered prior to the interview starting!** This info will not normally be shared with LE.

- Epidemiological Data/Risk Factor Information & Patient Demographics (e.g. age, ethnicity, occupation, travel attendance at large events)

- LE

- Receive any threats?
- What has patient been doing (travel, work, etc.) during the incubation period?
- Who has the patient been in contact with?



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Challenges

- Personal medical information gathered that might be useful to LE
 - PH needs to consider how to share sensitive medical information which does impact the LE investigation
- Lesser crimes that come up during questioning (drug usage, illegal alien, etc)
 - LE must put aside investigating or threatening to prosecute patient for lesser crimes not involved in possible bioterrorism incident so that PH/LE may gather information related to the source of the attack
 - LE does not make promises, but focuses on the crime of terrorism



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Summary

- Although both agencies have different goals, they have a shared objective – to determine where and when a release has occurred
- Law Enforcement's effectiveness in accomplishing their goal will enhance Public Health's abilities to protect the public