

Section UTMB On-line Documentation	Policy 3.11
Subject Healthcare Epidemiology Policies and Procedures	Revised 11.27.13
Topic: 3.11 - Communication with the Media and the Public About an Emerging Infectious Disease (EID)	2004 - Author

3.11 - Communication with the Media and the Public About an Emerging Infectious Disease (EID)

Purpose To provide appropriate, accurate and uniform information to the media and the public on all aspects of an EID.

Audience To the administrations and public relations personnel at the Galveston County Health District (GCHD), and The University of Texas Medical Branch (UTMB).

Policy Statement:

- I. Goals
 - A. To develop a system of communication compatible with that of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS).
 - B. To develop an integrated program between UTMB and the GCHD for preparation and release of information to the media and the public.
 - C. Specific goals for the integrated public relations program.
 1. To instill and maintain public confidence in the nation's public health system and its ability to respond to and manage an EID outbreak.
 2. To contribute to the maintenance of order, minimization of public panic and fear, and facilitation of public protection through the provision of accurate, rapid, and complete information.
 3. To provide accurate, consistent, and comprehensive information about an EID.
 4. To address rumors, inaccuracies, and misconceptions as quickly as possible, and prevent stigmatization of affected groups.
- II. The foundation for effective communication is a set of key messages that can be used consistently to highlight and reinforce the lessons learned and generate an appropriate response to an EID that minimizes risk while ensuring a strong and rapid response.
- III. All information about EID cases at UTMB provided to the print and electronic media, either by press release, interviews or UTMB personnel, as well as the distribution of information via social media will be coordinated between the Public Relations Officer at the GCHD and the Office of Marketing and Communications at UTMB. All information to be released by the GCHD about cases of an EID

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hospitalized at UTMB will be coordinated with the Office of Marketing and Communications at UTMB.

IV. Guidelines for providing information to the media.

- A. GCHD public health spokesperson should answer questions concerning an EID and the actions being taken to control and respond to the outbreak.
- B. Any requests for interviews of UTMB personnel will be coordinated and handled by the Media Relations section of the Office of Marketing and Communications at UTMB. Staff of the Media Relations team will coach and provide counsel about how to accurately provide timely and accurate information to the public via the news media, social media or any other communications venues.
- C. When appropriate the Media Relations section of the Office of Marketing and Communications at UTMB will provide key messages to convey to the public via the news media as well as interviewing techniques to emphasize UTMB's certain points.
- D. Key messages and talking points, when appropriate, will be discussed and/or shared with the Public Relations officer at the GCHD to ensure consistent, accurate messages.
- E. Key messages must be science-based, reflect current knowledge, and be based on good public health practice.

V. Formats for release of information to the media

- A. News briefings as necessary, supplemented by updates to websites, social media postings and other communications venues.
- B. News briefings may be delivered by one spokesperson or by a panel led by a moderator.
- C. When appropriate, invite members of the news media for one on one interviews with experts at the GCHD or at UTMB.