Local Actions – Global Impact

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The Setting

- In 1994, El Paso reported the largest outbreak of Botulism in the US, 30 persons affected in the US
- In 1996, NM reported several Botulism cases in a family who ate chile canned at home
  - Public health staff informed state and national authorities
  - The family informed that some cans of chile were sent as Christmas presents to family members in NM, TX and Chihuahua
The Situation

• Good information exchange among US Public health authorities at local, state and national levels

• No communication with Mexico to report the potential risk of a Botulism outbreak
  – International information exchange only at national level and between Foreign Affairs Offices
  – Delay of ~3 weeks to start activities in the sister cities
The Challenge

• A local issue becomes a trans-border issue
  – US: 2 states, 3 counties
  – International: 2 nations, 3 states, many counties

• Local agencies at both sides of the border need to act, then need information, but
  – What to communicate
  – To whom, How, When, How often…
  – Language
The Solution

- NMSU designed a binational mechanism of exchange and analysis of health information:
  - Among health authorities in US and Mexico
  - To allow expeditious response to health situations
  - Based on established and approved protocols at all levels
The Outcomes

• 1997, EPI-FAX system developed at NMSU and established in NM, TX and Chihuahua
  – NMSU-BEC named the central point of information exchange

• 1999, XVII Border Governors Conference (BGC) Joint Declaration resolved to establish an information system based on the EPI-FAX
  – NMSU developed the Binational Border Health Information System (BBHIS)

• 2001, XIX BGC Joint Declaration resolved to expand the BBHIS to all border states
  – Binational Technical Working Group (BTWG), chaired by Dr. Vilchis (2001-04 and 05-08)
The Impact

• 2000, The US-Mexico Border Health Commission established its first outreach office in NMSU main campus under Dr. Vilchis’ direction

• 2002, the BBHIS was used as the information exchange mechanism for bioterrorism

• 2004, the BGC Joint Declaration resolved to use the BBHIS as a frame to coordinate actions on emergency preparedness and in 2009 for Influenza A H1N1
The Impact

• 2006, Dr. Vilchis developed and implemented the Binational Tuberculosis Surveillance for NM and Chihuahua, used now in 9 states

• 2009, Argentina-Brazil-Uruguay adapted the BBHIS for their border region

• 2011, frame used for chronic diseases by AMNET (Americas Network for Chronic Disease Surveillance)
Thank you

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