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Annual Summer Seminar: The Global Response to Terror

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Annual Summer Seminar: The Global Response to Terror

The role of public health in bioterrorism preparedness was the theme for the Office of Health Policy's Ninth Annual Summer Seminar, entitled, "The Global Response to Terror." The event, held on July 11, 2003, at the Hotel Sofitel in Philadelphia, brought together over 150 health care professionals to examine the major obstacles facing both government and the health care system in responding to the critical bioterrorism challenge.

The featured speakers, William Winkenwerder, MD, Assistant Secretary of Defense for Health Affairs, and Eric Noji, MD, Senior Policy Advisor for Public Health, Preparedness Division, Department of Homeland Security, addressed efforts underway to enhance bioterrorism preparedness and emergency response. According to Dr. Winkenwerder, nearly \$11 billion has been spent on federal biodefense programs in the last 18 months. These programs include "Biowatch," now in 30 cities, which monitors the environment for aerosolized spread of various agents. He said the government plans to invest another \$6 billion in the research and development of new vaccines for smallpox, anthrax, and other infectious diseases.

"This has been the most significant U.S. government transformation since the Department of Defense was created following World War II," said Dr. Noji, referring to the establishment of the Department of Homeland Security, a coordinated effort of federal, state and local agencies. He described key research underway to enhance homeland defense, such as new techniques for early identification of patients infected by biological weapons and the promotion of universal precautions for preventing infectious diseases such as SARS and smallpox among health care workers.

The program also included a panel discussion with Joanne Godley, MD, MPH, Medical Director, City of Philadelphia; Vivian Coates, MBA, Vice President of Information Services and Technology Assessment, ECRI; and Sally Phillips, RN, PhD, Director, Bioterrorism Preparedness Research Program, Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality.

For information on upcoming events, contact Barbara Bozarth, Program Director, Education, at 215-955-2822.