ENHANCING EMERGENCY RESPONSE, PREPAREDNESS AND HEALTH COMMUNICATIONS THROUGH DISCOVER MS

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Abstract: Emergency preparedness is vital in responding to pathogen outbreak or disaster related illnesses. The effectiveness of health officials and policy makers to plan for appropriate action for controlling epidemic depends on spotting the locations of early infected individuals at each location, documenting and passing on the data to a centralized location, analyzing the spatial distribution of initial infections in the context of the nature of the epidemic, susceptible populations, mobility of the infected and surrounding environments. Early detection and proper communication are the key elements in saving lives and resources. The purpose of this study is to integrate information on location of hospitals and/or health centers, their capacity, characterization, and areas of their specialization on The Disaster, Incident, and Situational Collaborative Operational Virtual Environment Resource for Mississippi (DISCOVER MS) system developed by the National Center for Biodefense Communications (NCBC) which allows the decision makers and emergency response personnel to direct the infected to appropriate locations. DISCOVER MS helps state officials know the patterns of illness county by county, thus allowing plans of action easier to assess and implement accordingly. As a component of the Virtual USA database, DISCOVER MS allows vital disease information to be linked nationally in case of widespread epidemic.