Committee: Surveillance Informatics Steering Committee

Title: Implementation of the US-Mexico Guidelines for Coordination on Epidemiologic Events of Mutual Interest, Communication Pathways for Binational Notifications, and Creating a List of Binationally Notifiable Infectious Diseases

I. Statement of the Problem:
A number of infectious diseases of public health importance have been documented to have higher incidence along the US-Mexico border and many bi-national infectious disease outbreaks have occurred over the past 20 years. These outbreaks not only affect the states along the U.S.-Mexico border but often other states throughout the US.

CSTE has passed two previous resolutions related to bi-national and border health. In 1997, CSTE encouraged the establishment of bi-national border infectious disease surveillance to improve epidemiologic information in the US-Mexico border region. This led to the creation of the Border Infectious Disease Surveillance (BIDS) Program in 1999 and has greatly strengthened regional surveillance and information sharing for a variety of infectious diseases and other conditions as well as stimulated a number of successful bi-national infectious disease outbreak investigations (see references below). In 2003, the Assistant Secretary for Preparedness and Response (within the US Department of Health and Human Services [HHS]) funded the Early Warning Infectious Disease Surveillance (EWIDS) Program, providing funding to U.S. border states and Mexico to enhance surveillance infrastructure for bioterrorism events, laboratory preparedness, and response to public health emergencies. In 2006, CSTE recommended the creation of bi-national guidelines for cooperation on epidemiologic events of mutual interest to facilitate and systematize bi-national information exchange and reduce barriers to such cooperation (2006 Position Statement, “Guidelines for U.S.-Mexico Coordination on Epidemiologic Events of Mutual Interest”). These CSTE recommendations are consistent with specific articles of the revised 2005 World Health Organization’s International Health Regulations (IHR) that encourage development of bi-national agreements that complement the IHR goals for more transparency of health information exchange to enable effective disease prevention, response to, and control of public health emergencies of international concern. These bi-national guidelines, known as the “US Mexico Guidelines for Coordination on Epidemiologic Events of Mutual Interest” (Guidelines, http://www2a.cdc.gov/phlp/docs/us_mexico_epi_info_sharing.pdf), were completed in 2007 with contribution from CSTE and several states along the US-Mexico border. Formal approval by the Mexico Secretariat of Health was followed by the US Department of Health and Human Services in March 2010. CSTE applauds the final approval of the “US Mexico Guidelines for Cooperation on Epidemiologic Events of Mutual Interest” by US HHS as recommended by CSTE in 2006.

In June 2010, the CDC, border states, and public health agencies in Mexico convened a Binational Infectious Disease Technical Work Group that includes CSTE members. A cross
cutting team which also includes CSTE and various state and local health department officials is developing a Binational Communication Pathway Protocol for binational notifications to systematize and clarify appropriate routes of communication in accordance with the “US Mexico Guidelines for Cooperation on Epidemiologic Events of Mutual Interest”. This work group is also in the process of developing a list of binationally notifiable conditions and binational outbreak investigation protocols.

II. Statement of the desired action(s) to be taken:

1) CSTE endorses the ongoing development of the US Mexico Binational Communications Pathways Protocol for presentation to CSTE for discussion and approval at a later date.

2) CSTE requests that CDC continue to work with CSTE and the U.S. border states to implement the “US Mexico Guidelines for Cooperation on Epidemiologic Events of Mutual Interest” by developing a list of binationally notifiable conditions and piloting binational notification using the binational communication pathway protocol.

III. Public Health Impact:
The implementation of the “US Mexico Guidelines for Cooperation on Epidemiologic Events of Mutual Interest”, through collaboration of CDC, CSTE and the U.S. border states, will improve infectious disease prevention and control in both countries and allow for more efficient communication and collaboration consistent with new WHO international health regulations. The US Mexico Binational Communications Pathways Protocol is intended to promote a minimum level of communication, not to restrict communication. Additional pathways of communication may be used as appropriate. Piloting the US Mexico Binational Communications Pathways Protocol will provide information to finalize the protocol for presentation to CSTE for discussion and approval at a later date.

IV. References

Tuberculosis
2. Preventing and Controlling Tuberculosis Along the U.S.-Mexico Border  MMWR 2001,Vol 50 (RR1);1-2

Vaccine-preventable diseases

Foodborne diseases

Vector-borne and Zoonotic Diseases
12. Imported human rabies – California, 2008. MMWR 2009 Vol 58(26);713-6

Respiratory Diseases
15. CDC. Swine influenza A (H1N1) infection in two children---southern California, March--April 2009. MMWR 2009;58(Dispatch):1—3
16. CDC. Outbreak of swine-origin influenza A (H1N1) virus infection---Mexico, March--April 2009. MMWR 200958:467--70.

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