

GATEWAY DYNAMICS: UNDERSTANDING THE IMPORTANCE OF MULTI-AGENCY COLLABORATION IN MANAGING OUTBREAKS AT INTERNATIONAL POINTS OF ENTRY

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ABSTRACT

INTRODUCTION: The International Health Regulations (IHR) 2005 is a framework that legally binds 194 World Health Organization (WHO) member states. It aims to prevent, protect against, control and provide response to public health emergencies of international concern (PHEIC). The IHR mandates each State Party to establish a resilient Point of Entry (POE) which necessitates the collaborative effort by all key stakeholders from different agencies. **OBJECTIVE:** This study intended to evaluate the importance of multi-agency collaboration in managing outbreaks at international POE in Batu Pahat, Johore. **METHODOLOGY:** A tabletop exercise on management of infectious disease of PHEIC was organized by International POE Unit of Batu Pahat District Health Office on 5th May 2024 involving 19 agencies in Batu Pahat. A Focus Group Discussion (FGD) and SWOT analysis was carried out to gather detailed and insightful information on stakeholder understanding of outbreak management. **RESULTS:** The SWOT Analysis of the tabletop exercise revealed several key insights. Strength includes the participation of various stakeholders ensuring expert input in the discussions. Weaknesses identified were lack of communication and chain of command, insufficient information on PHEIC and role of agencies during outbreak. There is a need to enhance knowledge and understanding of guidelines, procedures, and contingency plans. The exercise highlighted opportunity to increase more future discussion, though also revealed threats such as accessibility, absence of private healthcare providers and insufficient contingency planning from shipping agencies. **CONCLUSION:** Significant improvements are necessary to better achieve the objectives of IHR in Batu Pahat. The establishment of structured and coordinated mechanism is essential. This analysis serves as a foundation for more collaboration with multi-agency in Batu Pahat to build a sturdy POE in facing any international outbreaks.

Keywords: Outbreak, Point of Entry, Multi-agency
