Managing “The Panic”

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March 14, 2018

>15,000 Ebola Infections
>11,000 Ebola Deaths
Infectious Disease Model

Host

Vector

Agent

Environment
September 26, 2014, Womey, Guinea
**Changes in Mortality Before and After Ebola**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Maternal</th>
<th>Infant</th>
<th>Under-5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Guinea</td>
<td>+38%</td>
<td>+7%</td>
<td>+10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberia</td>
<td>+111%</td>
<td>+20%</td>
<td>+28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sierra Leone</td>
<td>+74%</td>
<td>+13%</td>
<td>+19%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Estimated >10,000 deaths from HIV, TB, and malaria due to decreased health care utilization

The economic impact of a flu pandemic is more from efforts to avoid infection than from illness and death from flu.

Panic

A sudden and excessive feeling of alarm or fear, usually affecting a body of persons, and leading to extravagant or injudicious efforts to secure safety

--Oxford English Dictionary
“Panic” Model

Psychology

Information

Outbreak

Community
Outbreak

- Urgent, alarming, anxiety provoking
- Unpredictable and unfolding, with setbacks and surprises
- Newsworthy with high political profile
Community

- Level of trust in leaders, healthcare system, outsiders
- Existing beliefs about disease
- Second agendas
- Culturally accepted practices affecting transmission
Psychology

- Self-protection instincts
- Denial—"wait and see"
- Imagine the worst
- Believe the first thing we hear
- Conspiracy theories
Information

- Withholding of information to avoid panic/disruption
- Tendency for media to focus on extremes
- Spread of fanciful remedies
- Fact and fiction blurred—rumors fill gaps in facts
Social Media

Social media is:

- Fast
- Widespread
- Source of info for many
- Not necessarily true
- Increasingly sophisticated

From: Social@Ogilvy
“The Panic” Contributes to Negative Outcomes

- Death and illness
  - From dysfunctional outbreak responses
  - From disruption in health services

- Stigma and discrimination against sick or risk groups

- Economic loss from disruption
How Can We Prevent and Manage “The Panic”
Engage with and listen to the community as a respected partner.
1. Engage with and listen to the community as a respected partner.

- Learn from what the community is thinking and doing about the outbreak
- Understand the broader social, cultural, political and social environment
- Establish communications channels with the community
- Demonstrate respect and build trust
Be honest, open, credible, and proactive in communications.
2. Be honest, open, credible, and proactive in communications.

- Avoid temptation to hide bad news
- Avoid being overly reassuring
- Try to be first source of information
- Admit what you don’t know
Communicate clearly and compassionately. Promote action.

- Express empathy early
- Use plain language
- Respond to community concerns
- Provide positive actions to take
Meet the needs of the media, manage social media, and coordinate communications.
4. Meet the needs of the media, manage social media, and coordinate communications.

- Invest in trusting relationship with media during “peacetime”
- Expect media to lean towards sensational, to simplify stories, and to be adversarial
- Understand the social media landscape in your community and engage proactively
- Coordinate communications with stakeholders
5

Plan and prepare.
5. Plan and prepare.

- Don’t wait until outbreak to start planning
- Meet proactively with partners
- Determine roles, who is saying/doing what
- Keep plan simple and flexible
The right message at the right time from the right person can save lives...
Thank you!

Risk Communication Resources:
http://emergency.cdc.gov/cerc/index.asp

The findings and conclusions in this report are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official position of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.