

Assessment of Preparedness and Response to Emerging and Reemerging Epidemic Diseases

Emerging infectious disease is simply describes as newly identified and previously unknown infectious agents that cause public health problems either locally or internationally. Moreover, Re-emerging infectious disease infectious agents that have been known for some time, had fallen to such low levels that they were no longer considered public health problems and are now showing upward trends in incidence or prevalence worldwide. In other words, Re-emerging diseases are known diseases that be prepared to cope with large numbers of patients. Most countries have been caught unaware and were also unprepared to handle any epidemics. In Tanzania, there are a number of disease outbreaks which have occurred after independence. The unpreparedness has consequently resulted in thousands of deaths, while health authorities were attempting to put in place mitigation measure to urgently contain the outbreak. The main objective of this study was to assess how referral hospitals are prepared and able to respond to emerging and reemerging epidemic diseases in Dar es Salaam region. Across sectional descriptive study was conducted in the Dar es Salaam region in December, 2016, whereby the level of hospital preparedness and response was assessed using a quantitative approach. This study was carried out at the emergency departments of Muhimbili National Hospital, Amana Hospital and Mwananyamala Hospital. A convenient sampling technique was used to select study participants. Data from this study was collected by using a questionnaire. This study shows that the level of hospital preparedness and response to epidemic diseases was low and lacking in several different components; hospitals with a written emergency preparedness plan numbered 42 (48.8%); those with a command centre were 53 (61.6%); hospitals with SOP were 27 (58.7%); most had no isolation room , were 65 (75.6%); or no Triage are 70 (81.4%); many hospitals had no area for receiving patients 60 (69.8%); over half 45 (52.3%) were not able to manage disasters; most, 69 (80.2%), did not have adequate staffing levels; and 49 (57.0%) hospitals did not provide PPE. Also, the findings show that 43 ((50.6%) respondents were aware of their responsibilities during a disease outbreak, however 60 (69.8%) had not attended any disaster training and 76 (88.4%) accepted it as their duty as healthcare workers to care for patients during a disease epidemic. The results of this study suggest there are important opportunities for improvement, which will better prepare hospitals to respond to emerging and reemerging epidemic. The results of this study suggest there are important opportunities for improvement, which will better prepare hospitals to respond to emerging and reemerging epidemic diseases. There were some specific gaps found in this study including: inadequate surge capacity, lack of disaster planning, inadequate personnel, shortage of equipment, lack of isolation areas for patients and a lack of training for staff about disaster management.

For full thesis please contact Mujahid Gabier at mujahidg@sun.ac.za