

Student Abstract

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Title: Cross-Border Public Health Emergency Preparedness Planning Between Western New York and the Province of Ontario.

Abstract: This poster showcases recent developments in, and the legal considerations arising from, ongoing public health emergency planning between Western New York and the Province of Ontario. Since 1986, Erie (Buffalo) and Niagara (Niagara Falls) County, New York have maintained an International Joint Committee on Emergency Planning with the Province of Ontario. This committee manages all peacetime disasters and emergencies that involve both nations or require mutual assistance. This arrangement proved invaluable during the SARS outbreak of 2003 and is prominently featured in the presentation. The International Joint Committee is governed by a standing Cross-Border Contingency Plan and has representatives from a range of public and private entities as diverse as international bridge authorities, social service organizations, and public health agencies. This broad-based framework was instrumental in getting local medical networks to "think regionally" in formulating plans for public health emergencies and mass casualty incidents. Operations of the Joint Committee maintain jurisdictional sovereignty to the greatest extent possible while leveraging both Canadian and U.S. resources, personnel and medical facilities. The Western New York Public Health Alliance, a seven county public health organization, also plays a key role in communicating public health emergency preparedness to the larger community. The Alliance publishes a Physician's Guide to Public Health with companion CR-ROM for medical providers in both nations. The most recent revision includes a section discussing bio-terrorism and cross-border emergency plans.