CEIP Goes International

In late October 2017, CEIP received a request to host a delegation of physicians, public health laboratorians and senior public health officials from the Jilin Department of Health and the Jilin Provincial Disease Prevention and Control Center of China. They requested a two hour meeting to discuss: 1) an introduction of the California Emerging Infections Program (CEIP), 2) current CEIP projects and activities, and 3) insights on coordination of studies and information sharing among collaborators including academic partners, the California Department of Public Health, Bay Area local health jurisdictions, and the larger EIP network. We were happy to provide this and begin planning for this meeting but what had prompted this unique group of public health professionals to seek us out?

Jilin Province is located in the northeastern part of China, with North Korea on its northeastern border and Russia on its northern border. In September 2017, The 11th China-Northeast Asia Expo, a cross-border platform for business cooperation among Northeast Asian countries, was held in the capital city Changchun of Jilin Province. The inquiry stated, “As Jilin pursues cross-border and regional economic growth, emergent infectious diseases crossing borders also pose a serious risk...The objective of the group’s program is to learn about improving surveillance and control of important and emerging infectious diseases...”

This delegation was being hosted through a program at UC Davis, Center for Sustainable Development and Policy (CSDP). CSDP encourages communication and educational programs that build capacity for sustainable development and effective government. This was their connection to CEIP.

CEIP faced two significant challenges with this opportunity: the breadth of information requested and a language barrier. From our experience with local health jurisdictions we know that even the most cursory overview of CEIP takes a minimum of one hour:

Several days before the delegation arrived CEIP’s Associate Director, Gretchen Rothrock, met by phone with the interpreter to assist with scientific names, acronyms, and other words commonly used when discussing the work of the Emerging Infections Program. PowerPoint presentations were provided by...
each Core Project Coordinator. The interpreter translated these in advance so that he would not have to do this 'on the fly' during the presentation. CEIP staff learned an important lesson about Mandarin: for each phrase of English, it takes about twice as long to say the same thing in Mandarin!

On December 1, 2017, the delegation of twenty public health professionals from Jilin Province arrived at our downtown Oakland office and were met by Drs. Reingold and Vugia, two of our CEIP co-Directors, as well as many of our staff, including the Project Coordinators who would be presenting. We were able to meet in a large conference room in our office building, giving the group of nearly forty plenty of room to chat and mingle. As the presentations were given, presenters paused after a few phrases and gave the interpreter a chance to translate, making it possible for the delegates to keep up with the PowerPoint slides. This pacing was critical for the translation process.

After the PowerPoint session concluded, there was a lively exchange of questions. Some were specific about EIP projects and others were more general. One delegate asked a question about how we make decisions regarding the data we collect: “you collect all of these data... how do you decide what policy to make?” This was a very tough question to answer. Dr. Reingold responded that developing policy from data takes a very long time and that it involves many people, lengthy analysis, and much review and consideration.

After the discussion ended, the entire group met informally. Chunguang Yang, Deputy Director General of the Jilin Provincial Department of Health presented gifts for CEIP. Later that day, CEIP received a thank you from the sponsor of the group, Dr. Larry Berman of CSDP.

One of the primary goals of the ten-state EIP is to disseminate information, “ultimately transferring what is learned to public health agencies [my italics].” This was a unique opportunity to disseminate information internationally, and, considering the remarkable success of this meeting, we would like to continue communicating CEIP knowledge to local public health departments, the public, and other international public health agencies.

Contributed by Gretchen Rothrock, MPH

Members of the Jilin delegation and CEIP staff
The 2016-2017 influenza season (October 1, 2016 through April 30, 2017) was a record season for influenza hospitalizations in Contra Costa, Alameda, and San Francisco counties (total cases= 2,588). Then the 2017-2018 season topped that record with 4,186 total cases! See the figure below for the numbers of influenza hospitalizations by week during the last five seasons.

Influenza hospitalization data are used by state and national public health officials to monitor severe influenza activity during the influenza season. Using FluSurv-NET data and data from other national influenza surveillance systems, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) can monitor the impact of influenza on health systems, such as inpatient and emergency bed capacity; warn of potential shortages of influenza vaccine and antivirals; and detect emergence of new pandemic strains, such as during the 2009/2010 H1N1 pandemic.

Near real-time reporting of hospitalized influenza cases to CEIP can help the CDC and California Department of Public Health quickly answer questions like “How severe is this influenza season compared to prior seasons?” or “What is the burden of influenza this season compared to prior seasons?” or “How many people in various age groups died from influenza this season compared to prior seasons?”

During the summer and fall of 2018, CEIP staff will be reaching out to laboratory and infection control contacts to explore ways to obtain timely electronic lists of people hospitalized with influenza.

Contributed by Ashley Coates, MPH and Pamela Daily Kirley, MPH

Carbapenem-resistant Enterobacteriaceae (CRE) Surveillance

CEIP is now conducting surveillance for CRE in Alameda, Contra Costa, Orange, and San Francisco counties. Surveillance includes all Enterobacteriaceae resistant to at least one carbapenem (organisms intrinsically resistant to imipenem must be resistant to another carbapenem) isolated from all sources. For more information please contact Joelle Nadle, jnadle@ceip.us.

Contributed by Joelle Nadle, MPH
CEIP provides training opportunities for clinicians, laboratorians, researchers, local public health professionals, and public health students. This includes providing internships, practicums, and independent study opportunities for current students. In May 2018, Jeremy Roland, a part-time (now full-time) CEIP research assistant and former summer intern, completed the Infectious Disease and Vaccinology MPH program; Tara Scheuer, a full-time Surveillance Officer, completed the online MPH program; and Vit Kraushaar MD, a CEIP independent study student, completed the one-year Epidemiology MPH program. Congratulations graduates!

From left: Jeremy Roland, Tara Scheuer, Vit Kraushaar

The California Emerging Infections Program is a program of Public Health Foundation Enterprises Inc. and a collaboration with the California Department of Public Health.