

## **SITUATIONAL AWARENESS**

**Panelists**     Dr. Kevin Yeskey, ASPR  
                      Dr. Dan Sosin, CDC  
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                      Technology

### **Summary**

Through the National Health Information Network (NHIN) and the PAHPA, HHS will leverage the work of the National Electronic Disease Surveillance System (NEDSS), the Public Health Information Network (PHIN), Biosense, and other collaborations to support the advancement of a coordinated nationwide health infrastructure for health care and public health. This will, in turn, provide more complete and integrated situational awareness for public decision makers during emergencies. The session was a forum for the stakeholders to engage in conversation with the panelists on their comments, questions, and issues they want addressed as situational awareness programs and initiatives progress forward in the PAHPA implementation.

### **Session Highlights**

- PAHPA mandates the establishment of a near real-time electronic, nationwide public health situational awareness capability. The intent behind this is to work with what the Federal Government already has and weave it together in a coherent, efficient, effective way to create a national capability.
- The key components of situational awareness are health-related events, critical response resources, medical/health care capacity, environmental threats, public awareness and information, and preparedness status.
- Situational awareness is needed concerning critical response resources, such as countermeasure management, delivery, personnel tracking, transportation, information system functions, medical and healthcare capacity.
- The Office of the National Coordinator is accelerating the adoption of health information technology in a thoughtful way that allows us to leverage information technology revolution into both medical care and public health.
- HHS has been engaging in broad intergovernmental efforts around situational awareness, both at the Federal level and at the State, Tribal, Territorial, and local governmental levels. This is a lot of what we do every day.
- In order to move forward, we are continuing the commitments to platform and data source assessment and analysis of individualization and reporting. Also, engaging partners and stakeholders in the planning for this system is important.
- Fashioning an agile strategy for nationwide public health situational awareness is what's asked for first in the PAHPA legislation, and second, to implement that strategy in rapid fashion, and execute the strategy priorities in accordance with the resources available.
- With regard to telehealth issues, applications need to be user-friendly.
- HHS is discussing with the States and with Federal partners their various credentialing processes, and is investigating issues of interoperability and data sharing.

## Key Questions and Comments

- *Is there any effort to develop a common standard so that they can talk to one another so that there is a common operational picture?* This question was asked in reference to emergency departments having electronic medical records, or IT systems. The answer was that everyone is working within the National Health Information Network (NHIN) guidelines, and that the NHIN should facilitate the seamless transfer of information between all parties once the necessity arises.
- Standards for critical data need to be established. Guidelines should be established for what information is collected as well as what will be done with it and who is going to use it.
- A participant commented about an effort to implement an electronic performance support system like that of the Department of Defense (previously BMIST, now AHLTA Mobile) and how to build that type of system into the electronic medical record.
- *With regard to the operations cells of command and control, situational awareness, is EMS being included?* It is.
- *How does the Public Health Information Network (PHIN), the National Electronic Disease Surveillance System (NEDSS), and Biosense inform the NHIN?* By using NHIN's standardized common elements, information will be transferred easily moving forward, rather than having each entity use its own system, which may result in miscommunications.