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Strategies for Strengthening the Resilience of Public Health Systems for Pandemics, Disasters, and Other Emergencies

Benjamin Ryan [1] [2] [3], Mayumi Kako [4], Rok Fink [5], Perihan Şimşek [6], Paul Barach [7] [8], Jose Acosta [9], Sanjaya Bhatia [10], Mark Brickhouse [11], Matthew Fendt [9], Alicia Fontenot [1] [2], Nahuel Arenas Garcia [12], Shelby Garner [13], Abdülkadir Gunduz [14], D Mike Hardin Jr [15], Tim Hatch [16], LaShonda Malrey-Horne [17], Makiko MacDermot [18], Ryoma Kayano [18], Joshua McKone [9], Chaverle Noel [1], Shuhei Nomura [19] [20] [21], Jeremy Novak [22], Andrew Stricklin [23], Raymond Swienton [23], Ismail Tayfur [24], Bryan Brooks [1] [2]

Affiliations
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Abstract

Objective: The aim of this study was to identify and prioritize strategies for strengthening public health system resilience for pandemics, disasters, and other emergencies using a scorecard approach.

Methods: The United Nations Public Health System Resilience Scorecard (Scorecard) was applied across 5 workshops in Slovenia, Turkey, and the United States of America. The workshops focused on participants reviewing and discussing 23 questions/indicators. A Likert type scale was used for scoring with zero being the lowest and 5 the highest. The workshop scores were analyzed and discussed by participants to prioritize areas of need and develop resilience strategies. Data from all workshops were aggregated, analyzed, and interpreted to develop priorities representative of participating locations.

Results: Eight themes emerged representing the need for better integration of public health and disaster management systems. These include: assessing community disease burden; embedding long-term recovery groups in emergency systems; exploring mental health care needs; examining ecosystem risks; evaluating reserve funds; identifying what crisis communication strategies worked well; providing non-medical services; and reviewing resilience of existing facilities, alternate care sites, and institutions.

Conclusions: The Scorecard is an effective tool for establishing baseline resilience and prioritizing actions. The strategies identified reflect areas in most need for investment to improve public health system resilience.

Keywords: COVID-19 pandemic; health system; public policy; resilience; workshops.

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