International Health Regulations (2005) and Risk Communication

6th meeting of the Task Force on Access to Information under auspices of the UNECE Aarhus Convention (Geneva, 3-4 October 2019)

Dr Kersten Gutschmidt - Public Health, Environmental and Social Determinants of Health
What is the International Health Regulations (IHR 2005)?

- An international legal instrument to help protect countries from the international spread of disease.
- A set of rules that are legally binding on 196 countries (States Parties), including all WHO Member States.
IHR (2005) - Scope

- Before: Notification of three diseases (cholera, yellow fever, plague)

- Now: Notification of all events of international public health concern
  - Communicable disease outbreaks (e.g. Ebola, SARS, pandemic influenza)
  - Radiological events
  - Chemical releases
  - Food/product contamination
  - Events may be natural, accidental or deliberate
IHR (2005) - Key State Party obligations

Through IHR Focal and WHO Contact Point(s):

- Notify WHO of events of international public health concern
- Consult and share information with WHO
- Respond to requests for verification from WHO

Respond to public health risks that may spread internationally

Develop core capacity in key areas
IHR (2005) – Core Capacities

**IHR STATE PARTY SELF-ASSESSMENT ANNUAL REPORTING TOOL**

- C1. Legislation and Financing
- C2. IHR Coordination and National IHR Focal Point Functions
- C3. Zoonotic events and the human–animal interface
- C4. Food safety
- C5. Laboratory
- C6. Surveillance
- C7. Human resources
- C8. National Health Emergency Framework
- C9. Health Service Provision
- C10. Risk Communication
- C11. Points of entry
  - Section 1. Information by type of points of entry
  - Section 2. Overall national profile of the implementation of core capacities at Points of Entry
- C12. Chemical events
- C13. Radiation emergencies
IHR (2005) – Core Capacities

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- Real-time exchange of information
- Supports early and informed decision-making
- Experts, officials, affected people
- Mix of communication and engagement strategies
- Before, during and after event
Core Capacities – Implementation
WHO Emergency Risk Communication (ERC) guidance

- Communication for behavioural impact (COMBI) (2012)
- EURO – Zika Virus Risk Communication (2017)
Launched in September 2018