

Thursday, March 26, 2026

REGION 2 RESPTC PARTNER COMMUNITY NEWSLETTER

The Region 2 RESPTC at NYC Health + Hospitals/Bellevue serves as a National Special Pathogen System (NSPS) Level 1 facility and leads special pathogen preparedness efforts for New York, New Jersey, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands. Learn more about RESPTC updates, resources, and partner events [here](#).

OUTBREAK AND SPECIAL PATHOGEN NEWS

H5N1 Avian Influenza

Cambodia reported its second human [case](#) of H5N1 avian influenza for 2026. The patient in Banteay Meanchey province tested positive on March 14, 2026, confirmed by the Cambodian National Institute of Public Health. She had contact with dead chickens three days before testing positive.

Cambodia reported 18 human H5N1 cases in 2025, ten in 2024, and six in 2023. The country has experienced sustained circulation of H5N1 in poultry along with sporadic human spillover events.

RESOURCE HIGHLIGHTS, NEWS & UPCOMING EVENTS

March Travel Screening Country List

The New York City Health + Hospitals/Bellevue Travel Screening List reviews current special pathogen disease outbreaks that require prompt identification, isolation and/or specialized evaluation and management. The Bellevue Special Pathogens Program team develops this list in partnership with colleagues at NYU, Toronto University Health Network, and the Japan Institute for Health Security. This list, which may be found [here](#), can serve as a resource while screening patients.

AHEPP Presentation on Region 2 CONOPs

Jory Guttsman and Anthony Lo Piccolo presented on the development and ongoing work related to the HHS Region 2 High-Consequence Infectious Disease (HCID) Patient Transport Concept of Operations (CONOPS) at the 2026 AHEPP annual conference in Texas. Led by NYC H+H/Bellevue and NYC DOHMH, the CONOPS details the patient transfer plans for suspected or confirmed HCID patients in New York, New Jersey, Puerto Rico and the US Virgin Islands. Jory and Anthony detailed the development of the plan and revisions from a workshop held in 2023. The presentation continued to highlight the many exercises, including the national Tranquil Passport exercise simulating the transport of multiple patients due to a VHF cluster during the 2026 World Cup, which spanned the coordination, logistics, and physical movement of patients via airplane and ambulance. In addition, they outlined the ongoing work to further enhance EMS capacity for HCID transportation. The attendees, healthcare Emergency Management professionals from across the nation, were able to learn about the great work conducted in Region 2, and how the United States HCID preparedness infrastructure can support and prepare their facilities and organization. Thank you to all Region 2 partners who provided input on the CONOPs over the past few years!

Free Mystery Patient Drills for Region 2 Health Care Facilities

NYCDOHMH and Region 2 RESPTC started unannounced mystery patient drills in NYC and HHS Region 2 using an H5N1 scenario to test emergency department and select ambulatory site's ability to "identify, isolate and inform" when a patient presents with a potential high-consequence or emerging infectious disease. This is a collaboration between DOHMH and Bellevue, the Region 2 RESPTC, uses respective ASPR H5N1 supplemental funds. The drills are being conducted by the standardized patient program at the NYU medical school. If you are interested in applying for this free offering, please fill out our [interest form](#). Any healthcare facility in New York, New Jersey, Puerto Rico, or US Virgin Islands is eligible for this free resource.

UPCOMING NETEC WEBINAR



WEBINAR SERIES

Biosafety Cabinets 101: Foundations for Safe Handling of Special Pathogens



Biosafety Cabinets 101: Foundations for Safe Handling of Special Pathogens

Join **NETEC** on March 25, 2026, at 1:00 PM ET for a webinar focused on the critical role of biosafety cabinets (BSCs) in protecting personnel, products, and the environment when working with special pathogens.

This session will cover:

- Classes and types of biosafety cabinets
- Differences between BSCs, chemical fume hoods, and laminar flow clean benches
- How HEPA filtration and laminar airflow reduce exposure risks
- Best practices for safe and effective BSC workflow

Designed for healthcare workers, laboratorians, safety professionals, and facility personnel involved in high-consequence infectious disease response.

Continuing education credit available (**P.A.C.E.**, **CNE**, **CME**)

Register here:

https://unmc.zoom.us/webinar/register/1017716101119/WN_2C8XmpJSRgGqfdhCWX1idg

NETEC PODCAST: Transmission Interrupted

Now Live: **NETEC's** 10th Anniversary Podcast Episode

As NETEC marks 10 years of advancing high-consequence infectious disease preparedness, we're proud to share a special anniversary episode of Transmission Interrupted featuring **NETEC's** three Co-Principal Investigators.

In this milestone conversation, they reflect on how **NETEC** was built in the wake of the 2014 Ebola response, the lessons learned over the past decade, and the vision for the future of the National Special Pathogen System of Care.

This episode looks back at what it took to create **NETEC** — and looks ahead to what comes next.

Listen now: <https://netec.org/transmission-interrupted/netec-leadership-reflects-a-decade-of-special-pathogen-preparedness-in-the-us/>

TRAINING TIP OF THE MONTH

Use best practices that can be gleaned from your preparedness partners when developing a protocol for your Special Pathogens Unit. These best practices can be adapted to your facility's space, staff, and stuff and can save you time and help with risk mitigation. Bellevue, your Region 2 RESPTC, is here to assist you by sharing our best practices. – Trish Tennill, RESPTC External Training Lead

OUTBREAK ADVISORIES AND RESOURCES

Lassa Fever

Lassa fever is primarily found in West Africa and is spread through exposure to rats.

Symptoms typically occur within 1 to 3 weeks after infection and can include:

- fever,
- headache,
- bleeding,
- difficulty breathing,
- vomiting,
- facial swelling,
- pain in the chest, back, and abdomen, and
- shock

Resources

- [CDC Lassa Fever guidance](#)

H5N1 Avian Influenza

Providers should consider the possibility of H5N1 in patients who had contact with potentially infected sick or dead animals in the past week and show the following symptoms:

- fever,
- cough,
- sore throat,
- body aches,
- headaches,
- fatigue,
- eye redness (or conjunctivitis), and/or

- shortness of breath

Source: [CDC](#)

Providers should report any non-sub typeable influenza A cases to their Department of Health.

Resources

- [Region 2 RESPTC H5N1 Avian Influenza Webinar Recording](#)
- CDC HAN | [Accelerated Subtyping of Influenza A in Hospitalized Patients](#)
- [NETEC Influenza A Resource Repository](#)
- [NETEC Webinar Series \(8/14/2024\): H5N1 Town Hall: Updates for Frontline Staff](#)
- NETEC [Laboratory Resources: Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza \(HPAI\)](#)
- CDC [Bird Flu News and Spotlights](#)
- [NYC and NYS DOH health advisory on Influenza A subtyping](#)

New York State Reporting

To report sick or dead poultry in New York State, call the NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets at [518-457-3502](#).

PARTNER COMMUNITY SPOTLIGHT | Dr. Meg Aldrich



Margaret (Meg) Aldrich is an infectious disease specialist who serves as the pediatric and maternal-child hospital epidemiologist for NYU Langone Health System and as the pediatric hospital epidemiologist for NYC Health+Hospitals/Bellevue Hospital Center. She is an assistant professor of pediatrics at the NYU Grossman School of Medicine. Dr Aldrich also serves as a member of the NSPS Region 2 RESPTC Core Advisory Group and provides pediatric epidemiology support for the Bellevue Special Pathogens Program.

In November 2025, NSPS Region 2 RESPTC at NYC H+H Hospitals/Bellevue received a sub-award grant through the University of New Mexico from the Robert Wood Johnson foundation. The goal of this award is to design and implement a series of Project ECHO virtual communities of practice, to enhance regional preparedness for all hazards and high consequence infectious diseases. Dr Aldrich serves as the primary investigator for this grant and has been working with regional leaders in emergency preparedness to ensure the curriculum addresses the needs of our geographically diverse region. In her role as Project ECHO lead, she is also drawing on her personal experience working as a volunteer EMT with her local fire department, prior to pursuing a career in medicine.

Dr. Aldrich received her M.D. from St. George's University School of Medicine in 2009. After completing combined residency in Internal Medicine and Pediatrics at Rutgers New Jersey Medical School, she completed infectious diseases fellowship at Albert Einstein College of Medicine/Montefiore Medical Center in the Bronx, New York. She then spent 7 years serving as the pediatric and maternal-child hospital epidemiologist at Montefiore Medical Center/Children's Hospital at Montefiore. During her time at Montefiore, she was involved in managing responses to perinatal Zika virus infection, the 2019 NYC measles outbreak and the COVID-19 pandemic.

WHAT'S NEW ON THE REGION 2 RESPTC WEBSITE?

The Region 2 RESPTC website is a one-stop shop for all things related to special pathogen preparedness and response in New York, New Jersey, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands. The team has updated the [Tools and Resource page](#) with new resources including the latest Travel Screening List and resources dedicated to the H5N1 response. You can also read or re-read past newsletter issues [here](#).

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