

**Thursday, July 31, 2025**

## **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**

### **Nipah Virus Disease**

India's Kerala state reported [at least 2 cases](#) and one death from Nipah Virus Disease in July. Nipah Virus is spread through contact with infected animals, consuming soiled food/drinks, or contact with bodily fluids of an infected person. [Symptoms](#) include fever, headache, cough, sore throat, and difficulty breathing. Symptoms may progress to include brain swelling, confusion, and seizures.

### **H5N1 Avian Influenza**

Globally, cases of H5N1 continue to rise. [Cambodia](#) reported a spike of cases this month, bringing the annual total to 12 human cases and 6 deaths in 2025. There are no reported human cases of H5N1 in New York State. The CDC ended the [H5N1 emergency response](#) on July 7<sup>th</sup>, 2025.

## **RESOURCE HIGHLIGHTS & UPCOMING EVENTS**

### **Free Secret Shopper Exercises for your Facilities**

The Region 2 RESPTC is working to provide free secret shopper exercises, complete with an After-Action Report, to gauge facilities' preparedness to Identify, Isolate, and Inform at points of entry. The results of these exercises will be provided to your facility to help you better prepare for a special pathogen patient presenting to your site. The information obtained during these exercises will remain private to your facility with the generated reports and assessment tools meant to help assess your own readiness and meet regulatory requirements. If you are interested in applying for this free offering, please fill out our [interest form](#).

### **July Travel Screening Country List**

The New York City Health + Hospitals Travel Screening List reviews current special pathogen disease outbreaks that require prompt identification, isolation and/or specialized evaluation and management. This list, which may be found [here](#), can serve as a resource while screening patients.

## **Current Infectious Disease Outbreaks for New York City Providers**

The New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (NYC DOHMH) offers a list of current infectious disease outbreaks as a resource for healthcare providers in New York City. Find the resource [here](#).

### **CDC Be Ready for Measles Toolkit**

The CDC released a Be Ready for Measles Toolkit in June that includes fact sheets, social media graphics, and videos for the public, as well as outbreak-related response tools for clinicians and other public health professionals. Find the resource [here](#).

### **NEW! BEACON WEEKLY DIGEST**

The Biothreats Emergence, Analysis and Communications Network (BEACON) digest highlights the latest events and signals submitted to the BEACON platform—a global system for tracking and analyzing emerging biological threats. Stay informed with real-time updates from around the world, curated to help you monitor developments affecting human, animal, and environmental health. Subscribe [here](#).

### **REGION 2 NEWS**

#### **R2RESPTC'S DR. CHAN PUBLISHES ARTICLE ON HCID PREPAREDNESS**

Dr. Justin Chan, NYC Health + Hospitals / Bellevue's Epidemiologist and a core member of the R2RESPTC team, recently published an article on high-consequence infectious disease (HCID) preparedness. HClDs are acute human infectious diseases with high illness and case-fatality rates, few or no available effective treatment or prevention options, and the ability to spread in the community and within healthcare settings. This publication describes essential aspects of healthcare system preparedness for and response to HClDs and outlines priority areas for further investment in HCID preparedness, care, and research. Find the article [here](#).

#### **R2RESPTC PARTIPATES IN INTERNATIONAL PATIENT TRANSPORT EXERCISE**

The Region 2 RESPTC Team at NYC Health + Hospitals / Bellevue participated in the US Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Administration for Strategic Preparedness and Response (ASPR) Tranquil Passport Exercise on June 26<sup>th</sup>. This international exercise simulated a High-Consequence Infectious Disease (HCID) response in preparation for the 2026 World Cup. Eight patient actors were flown from Toronto to seven High Level Isolation Units in the United States using ASPR's new asset – the Portable Biocontainment Unit (PBCUs). The Region 2 RESPTC team activated the Special Pathogen Unit (SPU) at Bellevue – testing clinical protocols and ensuring unit readiness especially for a pediatric patient.



*Bellevue's Director of Emergency Management – Jory Guttsman – leading a discussion on the patient transfer with the FDNY EMS team.*





*Bellevue's nurses in Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) receiving an pediatric HCID patient actor from the FDNY team.*



*A pediatric patient actor inside Bellevue's biocontainment unit.*





Kendell Jones (R2RESPTC lead trainer) educating the team on how to safely don Personal Protective Equipment (PPE).

### TRAINING TIP OF THE MONTH

If a team member is unable to don and doff PPE, have them participate in PPE trainings as a trained observer.

### OUTBREAK ADVISORIES AND RESOURCES

#### H5N1

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](https://www.cdc.gov/h5n1/)

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](#)

## 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](tel:518-457-3502).

## PARTNER COMMUNITY SPOTLIGHT | ERFAN KARIM, MPH



As the Chief Operations Officer at NYC Health + Hospitals/Bellevue, Erfan Karim is a key leader of the Region 2 RESPTC out of Bellevue's Special Pathogens Program. A healthcare innovator with over a decade at NYC Health + Hospitals, he leads high-impact programs that expand access, improve outcomes, and strengthen performance across the largest public health system in the U.S.

Erfan previously led Virtual ExpressCare, scaling it to over 90,000 annual visits and expanding services across Medical, Behavioral Health, Substance Use, and Reproductive Health Urgent Care. His leadership was pivotal in NYC's COVID-19 response, including the launch of the 888-TREAT-NY therapeutic hotline in partnership with the NYS Department of Health. His efforts have expanded access for underserved communities and brought more than 100,000 new patients into the system. Erfan also co-chaired system-wide Shared Services and the MyChart Steering Committee, driving digital health innovation and operational efficiency.

A first-generation immigrant and lifelong Health + Hospitals patient, he is deeply committed to patient-centered care and the Region 2 RESPTC's mission of ensuring quality care for all patients, regardless of their illness or ability to pay. You can find his recent Becker's Podcast Interview [here](#) where he discusses protecting equitable access to care. He

is a 2024 Modern Healthcare Innovator, an America's Essential Hospitals Fellow, and holds degrees from NYU's College of Global Public Health and the Sophie Davis Program at CUNY School of Medicine.

He is committed to leading health systems that redefine access, accountability, and long-term value across the continuum of care—while engaging teams, communities, and stakeholders in shaping the future of healthcare. Erfan's innovative mindset and leadership has been essential to the R2 RESPTC's ability to deliver clinical excellence and bolster special pathogen preparedness efforts across HHS Region2.

#### **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](#).

**[SUBSCRIBE TO OUR NEWSLETTER](#)**