



Note

The Year 2020 that Vanished, Surveillance Evaluation of an Epidemic Intelligence Officer's Times: A Personal Note

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Never had I received so many calendars, but this very year that's 2020, a bout of calendars landed. And the bout continued with my hop, skip and jump into the life as an Epidemic Intelligence Service Officer (EISO) at the prestigious National Centre for Disease Control (NCDC). The 'India Epidemic Intelligence Services' course at the NCDC, New Delhi started on October 4, 2012.

New Delhi itself holds special memories for me in the school learnings, adventure sports, art and sculpture: all activities that went in the background through all these medical years. The year and the date were special: my official entry into Community Medicine and Public Health and of course my birthday that made me believe, EIS was meant for me! As Alexander Langmuir, the renowned epidemiologist who created the EIS at Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Atlanta said, "Each epidemic aid call was an adventure and a training experience..." While my dream came true as I joined this year, it was directly on the field lessons as the pandemic arrived!

Our first Core Activity of Learning (CAL) to be fulfilled under the two year course was the surveillance evaluation. While I submitted my official one, this evaluation happened in real-time and the lessons, the participants whether you like it or not will remain with me for eternity and beyond. So, dear fellow EISOs, no questions in the coming Thursday Afternoon Seminar (TAS) on that please.

Disclaimer: I take it as my word document was guided by the initials, the same way our CALs are! The scoring scale used is at the sole discretion of the author!

The Scenario Selected

National Centre for Disease Control

While the whole Epidemiology division gave us the insights for the course, we also had all of NCDC and CDC teaching us!! EISO, Dr. SC now the advisor for the South East Asia field epidemiology training programs in India that supports the course briefed us that we need to make our basics strong.

Our batch is the perfect amalgamation of the NEWS North South East and West: Dr. AK, Dr. BR, Dr. LP, Dr. MP, Dr. NN, Dr. SA, Dr. SP, Dr. SS, Dr. KA*EISOs Cohort 7*!! Our Resident Advisor from CDC, Dr. AB says it's a luckier number. And it is, we all though not presenting papers went to



this field epidemiology conference with the senior batches. The conference experience for us was thanks to the push by an EISO, now with CDC India, Dr. RY and EISOs Dr. VV, Dr. KS A who made us participate everywhere at the Conference! The field epidemiology network, thus, just got introduced in a fabulous way. This was the very last of the offline conferences in the near future as the pandemic arrived. But what I also got was an idea amongst other learnings for my first CAL-EISO Dr. CM (who did something similar for Ebola) with help from my mentor Dr. RS (EISO). Dr. RS is someone who will be the busiest busy in the armed force but still will stand for me!

International Airport and the Airport Health Organization, Mumbai

It's a close knit organization headed by EISO, Dr. AP. The first day was on the runway for a repatriation flight. And this was just the start of it. While Dr. AP became my supervisor much later, he had already given me a great opportunity to do my first CAL as an EISO. No questions asked but just the strong belief that it should be done well and documented. Whether it's the diary or this piece, I have taken it up from. Sir's deputy, Dr. PG stood like a rock-diamond and rock basically behind the daily times of my pandemic learnings.

Central Teams for COVID and the Maharashtra State Surveillance Unit

The Nair senior, IDSP network star and an inspiration to me, Dr. SK, again no questions asked just the strong belief I need to learn at every opportunity. While I crib at every opportunity to him, his guidance with a hearty laughter never ends. And the team lead, advisor to the Ministry, Senior Dr. SK who gives me insights into, Public Health Programme implementation are basically family. The COVID times perhaps did that through all the continuous work, no holiday even for a minute! Dr. R from EMR, Dr. SwCh and all other team members made me improve my report writing and disaster management learnings. The State Surveillance Unit made me sharpen my excel skills, field work for the outbreak, well, pandemic. The State Surveillance Officer, Dr. PA is its backbone. Leading from the front, he is an excellent life author with whom I look forward to outbreak investigations in the years to come.

The Stakeholders

These are actually the mentors that adapted me along the way; in times, my work was all over the place. EIS program coordinator Dr. TD, gave me an opportunity in the first place to just do it all and pushed me to give it all every time. Entomologist par excellence - Dr. SNS has been guiding me with all the vector borne diseases and just the rare chance to learn from the vector angle is mind boggling! From CDC India and One Health, Dr. VS, EISO what should I say! Sir dictated each and every correction for TAS - on his way to work, while coming back from work, in between meetings!

No matter how busy he is, always takes out time! Dr. SC, well she is an inspiration and constant support - been there through all my CALs and learnings. The case control study taught by chits virtually will remain my favourite! Dr. NV, from the Xeroxes to job searches, to just making it home at NCDC when I joined, the whole camp of Nair seniors at NCDC! Dr. RY and Dr. ST for giving the opportunity and the support through all the TAS and School work on Infection Control and Prevention. Hope to be learning much more under you! Our RA Dr. AB and Dr. RD have simplistic teaching techniques for the most complex epidemiological tasks! The Senior EISOs from Dr. AM, Dr. AJ, Dr. BSB, Dr. PP, Dr. VTP have been co-mentors on work as well as life! ASji, RRji, JSji and staff for being around the whole time!! Oh and the field epidemiology network that we became part of, for all round the clock unofficial learnings and inspiration!

The official framework: well, let's not get into it as even after the 101st version, I still will lose it on the readability scores from Microsoft word!

The Attributes

1. **Simplicity:** As in the experience and EISO times, starkly clear and simple, focussed on the basics!
2. **Flexibility:** To gauge this one takes no second thought. As an EISO we are expected to multi task and that's what gets the best out of us. Varied learnings and lessons.
3. **Acceptability:** Right in completely to give it all from the very beginning.
4. **Data Quality:** Improving as EIS and Dr. AP makes me document it all. Mentors, fellow and senior EISOs keep giving valuable feedback.
5. **Timeliness:** Bang on amidst the pandemic of the century and hope to prevent any such in the future through the life learned lessons.
6. **Sensitivity:** Very high. Oh that's my only weakness! Perhaps a strength too.
7. **Positive predictive value:** As I try to complete my CALs, look forward to the positive predictive value of outbreaks happening for my ten step learning. Yes those steps that I so wish to go right out there and do systematically. Right now, my PPV is poor.
8. **Usefulness:** The course teaches what you needed to know, in epidemiology and in life. And yes, I can say that right now too! But like Dr. AP says its awareness, knowing your SWOT that makes all the difference or Dr. SC rationale thinking.

So be it, all set for the new year, new learnings and experiences that hone my thinking skills and raise my awareness AND hopefully earn my CAL completion certificate- surveillance et al!