The Fear of Anthrax Exposure - A Communication Challenge Case Study at the Pentagon's DiLorenzo TriCare Health Clinic

Defending and battling against bioterrorism and disease through improved communications, public information dissemination, and disease surveillance has been placed at the center stage of priorities since the discovery of anthrax contaminated letters at post offices associated with the Pentagon. Many of the people reporting to the DiLorenzo TriCare Health Clinic, located in the Pentagon, exhibited high levels of anxiety and fear; and at the same time lacked trust in the Government and Pentagon officials. They were seeking information and answers for themselves and family members.

This presentation will describe training and consultation provided by the Health Risk Communication Program of the U.S. Army Center for Health Promotion and Preventive Medicine to the staff of the DiLorenzo TriCare Health Clinic and the Pentagon during and immediately following the rapidly developing response to the anthrax attack.

Tools and techniques will be presented that were used to enhance building trust, effectively deliver sensitive and technical information, and calm fears and anxieties in the time period directly after the anthrax contamination was discovered.

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