

An abstract depicting this website has been published and is available for view.

Choleracafe: an e-learning instrument for professionals involved in international health promotion in the fields of communicable disease prevention, surveillance and treatment

Objective: The response of the international community to a disaster pivots on the need for cooperation among different countries, organisations and professional figures. Epidemics are a likely consequence of the poor hygienic conditions in IDP (internally displaced people) settlements in particular during late and post emergency phases. Our objective is to construct a website with a double aim. On one hand to provide updated news, manuals and links for humanitarian operators on the field, promoting information sharing to achieve common quality standards for assistance worldwide. On the other hand, through the use of a forum, to provide a space of discussion and alert from the field in matters related to novel outbreaks and evolving humanitarian crisis.

Methods: Professional figures such as psychologists and international law and geo-policy experts have worked together with hygienists and infectious disease physicians with the aim of providing a comprehensive and colloquial approach to the issues raised in epidemics and humanitarian crisis in particular in developing countries. The effort has produced a website with a phpnews data insertion, a multiple page forum and several specific thematic areas.

Results: The website, www.choleracafe.com, is a pilot programme approved of by the University of Rome 'La Sapienza' department of Infectious and Tropical Diseases. It is composed of sections dedicated to: Infectious diseases, vaccination and prophylaxis, minimum standards, epidemiological surveillance, psychological support, legal issues and human rights, aero transport of highly contagious diseases and provides useful links regarding country information and international organisations. Moreover a manual called 'Basic International emergency setting field manual' has been compiled by the working group and is freely downloadable from the website. This instrument acts as a digest of the current standards in topics such as disaster management, psychological support, water and sanitation, reporting, evaluation, media and communication.

Conclusions: E-learning has developed in recent years to become a major source of information that is easily accessible, specific and universally accepted. Cholera Cafe' is a website, forum and news resource for Professionals involved in International Health Promotion in the field of Communicable disease prevention, surveillance and treatment that has moved beyond organisation-specific websites.

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