

RISK COMMUNICATION CHALLENGES IN A BIOLOGICAL OR CHEMICAL TERROR ATTACK

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Background: Risk and crisis communication is very challenging and even more so in a terrorist attack caused by biological or chemical agents due to its unpredictable emergency scenario and health consequences. Under the EU framework for improving preparedness and strengthening the response capacities to health emergencies of biological, chemical, environmental, and unknown origin, the project “Joint Action to Strengthen Health Preparedness and Response to Biological and Chemical Terror Attacks” (JA TERROR) aims, amongst others, to address gaps in health preparedness to response to biological and chemical terror attacks by cross-sectoral work. Promoting the implementation of risk and crisis communication in all stages of risk management is a focus of the WP7. This article aims to present identified challenges in risk communication in a biological or chemical terror attack.

Objective and Methods: A literature review of scientific findings about risk and crisis communication about biological or chemical terror attacks after 2000 and before October 2023 in peer-reviewed journals and English-language publications was performed. Exchange knowledge and lessons learned through project meetings and workshops

Results: Overall findings singled out the following risk communication challenges: nature of the threat (differing threat types, unpredictable, global threat), resources (lack of experts and competence, lack of training, lack of experience), cooperation (roles and responsibilities), public perception (psychological reactions, fear, panic, misinformation, etc.), preparedness communication, and communication and providing information during a crisis. In-depth analysis for identification of challenges from the angle of emergency management phases pointed to those

Conclusions: The list of identified challenges is not exhausted here, but their sorting out through the emergency management cycle is to highlight and point to those that should be recognised on time and considered for appropriate and time actions to be taken.

Keywords: biological, chemical, terrorist attack, risk communication