National Biosafety Stewardship Month: 
A Glimpse Into Institutional Safety Activities

David A. Martinson, Ph.D.
National Biosafety and Biocontainment Training Program
-A Program of the National Institutes of Health-
david.martinson@nih.gov
Objectives

• Introduce the National Biosafety Stewardship Month (NBSM), including activities that were suggested by the NIH.

• Discuss a survey analysis to gauge how well the NBSM was administered and received at various research institutions.

• Compile survey results to improve future events.

• Analyze survey answers to determine any gaps in institutional biosafety oversight programs and provide possible solutions to rectify these problems.

• Provide discussion topics that address widespread biosafety program obstacles.
National Biosafety Stewardship Month

• September, 2014, NIH laboratories participated, and NIH grantees institutions were encouraged to do the same.

Goals were to:

• Reexamine policies and procedures.

• Conduct inventories of infectious agents and toxins.

• Reinforce biosafety training of investigators, laboratory staff, and members of IBCs.
Survey Design

• ABSA distributed a 14 question survey entitled “ABSA National Biosafety Stewardship Month Survey” to all ABSA members.

• Questions were designed to address:
  o Awareness of the event.
  o Upper management support.
  o Types of activities undertaken.
  o Barriers to participation in the stewardship month.
  o Resources needed.
Analysis of Results and Responses

- All questions had predetermined suggested answers to select.
- An additional option for each answer was given to respond with “other” responses.
- All suggested and “other” responses were captured and analyzed.
- The most informative questions and responses are discussed here.
Q1-Please indicate your position in your place of employment.

- **Senior EH&S professionals**: 42%.
- **Target audience**: biosafety professionals, in particular senior EH&S professionals.
- **Not aware of NBSM initiative**: 20%.
Q2-How did you become aware of the NBSM initiative?

- Most efficacious: Memo from NIH Director and ABSA listserv.
  - Great for identifying biosafety professionals in the research setting.
- Private industry and hospital safety personnel may not be as readily targeted through these mechanisms.
Q3—Why did your institution not conduct any activities as part of the NBSM initiative?

- Encouraging: nearly half of the institutions that did not directly participate in NBSM were already conducting the activities described for NBSM.

- Discouraging: they did not want to improve upon their activities.

- Perhaps offer a wider variety of activities, help, or resources for the next NBSM.
Q4 - In response to NBSM, which of the following activities did your institution pursue?

- Conducted an extensive inventory of infectious agents and toxins
- Conducted training events
- Sought to catalogue all infectious agents and toxins
- Updated the catalogue of infectious agents and toxins
-Reviewed policies and procedures

- Many of the respondents asked their PIs to conduct inventories
  - Some do not have inventory systems

- A future question to ask is: If ABSA provides an inventory database outline would the institutions be more persistent in making sure inventories are created and maintained?
Q5 - Was the senior administration at your institution supportive of conducting activities as part of NBSM?

- Nearly 40% of respondents did not receive senior administration support.  
  - Administrative support is essential for generating employee participation.
- Administration was supportive but not willing to provide financial support.
Q6-Did you encounter any challenges in conducting activities in observation of NBSM?

- Insufficient biosafety/safety support staff to conduct activities
- Resistance from the investigator community
- Logistical challenges in reaching investigator community
- Insufficient financial support for these activities
- Unwillingness of institution to treat this event as an institution-wide priority
- Logistical challenges in accessing laboratories as needed
Q7 - What were some of the outcomes of NBSM at your institution?

- Obtained an increase in biosafety budget
- Added review of RG2 agents, etc., to IBC charter
- Discovery of inappropriately stored agents
- Assembled draft list of all infectious agents and toxins
- Found that investigators were more willing to adhere to biosafety requirements
- Found that senior administration was made more aware of and paid attention to the biosafety program
- Revised outdated or inappropriate policies and procedures
- Updated lists of all infectious agents and toxins

- The initiative served as an excellent catalyst for “housekeeping” especially in respect to freezers/stocks.
Q8 - Does your institution have plans to sustain any of the activities initiated as a consequence of NBSM?

- Performing annual inventory reviews and annual assessment of policies, procedures and training programs.
Q9- Would you like to see NBSM be an annual event with a different focus each year?

- September is a very busy time at most academic institutions, with it being the beginning of the semester.
- Many respondents commented that there was not enough lead time to prepare.
Q10- To assist you in strategizing improvements for your institution, what areas of professional development would you like to see ABSA offer a webinar or course in?

- Inventory system
- Biosafety awareness
- Safety culture efforts

- A simple online inventory system that would be easy to develop has been mentioned in responses for many different questions.

- Institutional safety culture should be a key topic for future programs.
Success of the National Biosafety Stewardship Month

- Reexamine policies and procedures.
- Conduct inventories of infectious agents and toxins.
- Reinforce biosafety training of investigators, laboratory staff, and members of IBCs.
Improvements

• Reinforce biosafety training of investigators, laboratory staff, and members of IBCs.

• Continue to target EH&S professionals, especially management, and begin incorporating private industry and hospital safety personnel.

• Tactics to enhance senior administration “buy-in” could promote safety culture.

• More work is required to develop a shift towards safety culture.
2015 NBSM

Thematic elements of enhancing a culture of safety/responsibility:

• Training

• Engagement

• Transparency
Acknowledgements

**NBBTP:**
Marissa Latterman, M.P.H.
Julianne L. Baron, Ph.D.
Hongliang Yang, Ph.D.

**ABSA:**
Marian Downing

Marcus Hodges, Ph.D.
Questions

Comments

Discussion Topics?

david.martinson@nih.gov