

10 — Thursday, April 27, 2017 — Town & Village

Bellevue participates in disease outbreak drill

On April 5, NYC Health + Hospitals led a citywide drill to test the city's readiness in the event of a sudden breakout of contagious and potentially lethal illnesses.

Three of the city hospital network's sites, Bellevue, Elmhurst and Gotham Health, Morrisania were involved in the exercise, which mimicked a real life response aimed at

keeping the public safe.

The New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, the Fire Department of New York, the Office of Chief Medical Examiner, New York City Office of Emergency Management and New York State Department of Health for the daylong interactive training, were partners in the test.

The challenge involved identifying and treating two patients with symptoms of Lassa fever and Middle Eastern Respiratory Syndrome (MERS-CoV) that they didn't know to expect. As an additional component of the exercise, the health system's Central Office Emergency Management was tasked with coordinating the care provision and keeping things safe. The Fire Department managed the emergency transportation of the mock patients, one of whom "dies" and is subsequently handled by the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner.

"The scope and complexity of today's exercise gave participants an added layer of realism," said Stanley Brezenoff, interim president and chief executive officer of NYC Health + Hospitals. "This type of hands-on exercise empowers clinicians to act from a position of strength if they ever encounter a real-life special pathogens exposure."

The exercise focused on two simulated patients, siblings who traveled to West Africa and the Middle East as public health students. One day after their return to New York City, the siblings presented separately to Elmhurst and Gotham Health, Morrisania with symptoms of special pathogens exposure. During the exercise, the siblings were portrayed by professional actors, and then by mannequins once the scenario advanced to an inpatient setting at NYC Health + Hospitals/Bellevue. The drill also included the handoff of a patient from the Fire Department to the Special Pathogens Program staff at NYC Health + Hospitals/Bellevue.

Goals included assessing emergency protocols and communication skills and reminding participants of the importance of taking patient



(Above and below) The simulation tested physicians' skills in an emergency.



travel histories.

During the exercise, clinicians wore personal protective equipment, including several layers of gloves, while caring for the simulated patients.

As the drill unfolded, there were also observers at the scene from various health organizations including the Centers for Disease Con-

trol and Prevention, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs and the National Ebola Training and Education Center.

"This is one of the most complex drills that we have ever undertaken," said Syra S. Madad, DHSC, MSC, MCP, director of the System-wide

Special Pathogens Program at NYC Health + Hospitals "Involving multiple city and state agencies and beginning with identification in a clinical setting by providers who don't know to expect this are two of the reasons that national and international observers are coming to watch and learn."