

Data sharing should become routine for best response to public health emergencies

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The recent outbreaks caused by Ebola and Zika viruses have highlighted the importance of medical and public health research in accelerating outbreak control and have prompted calls for researchers to share data rapidly and widely during public health emergencies. However, the routine practice of data sharing in scientific research, rather than reactive data sharing, will be needed to effectively prepare for future public health emergencies, according to Jean-Paul Chretien from the Integrated Biosurveillance Section, Armed Forces Health Surveillance Branch, Defense Health Agency, United States, and colleagues, writing in *PLOS Medicine*.

In their Essay the authors argue that the Ebola and Zika responses highlight openness challenges for effective data sharing and that three major impediments limit data sharing: there are no established standards for data users to credit data providers; scientists may doubt that sharing data will advance their scholarly stature as much as publishing primary research; and scientists may not be able to share data effectively because of inadequate technology, standards, or human capacity.

They conclude, "[r]ecent epidemics were surprises—Zika and chikungunya sweeping through the Americas; an Ebola pandemic with more than 10,000 deaths; the emergence of severe acute respiratory syndrome and Middle East respiratory syndrome, and an influenza pandemic (influenza A [H1N1]pdm09) originating in Mexico—and we can be sure there are more surprises to come. Opening all research provides the best chance to accelerate discovery and development that

will help during the next surprise."

More information: Chretien J-P, Rivers CM, Johansson MA (2016) Make Data Sharing Routine to Prepare for Public Health Emergencies. *PLoS Med* 13(8): e1002109. [DOI: 10.1371/journal.pmed.1002109](https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pmed.1002109)

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