

CDC launches new forecasting center for infectious diseases

April 19 2022, by Carla K. Johnson



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A new U.S. government center aims to become the National Weather Service for infectious diseases—an early warning system to help guide

the response to COVID-19 and future pandemics.

The new Center for Forecasting and Outbreak Analytics launched Tuesday. Its leaders say predicting the course of the COVID-19 pandemic in the U.S. has been hampered by data-collection problems.

In contrast, the United Kingdom uses regular population sampling with swab tests and blood draws to get a clearer picture of who's been infected, said Marc Lipsitch, the new center's science director. He said similar sampling should be considered in the U.S.

And the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention needs to have better access to data from state governments and hospitals, said Caitlin Rivers, the center's associate director.

CDC has been granted temporary authority for COVID-19 data collection, but the agency broadly relies on voluntary reporting and complex data agreements with states, Rivers said.

The center is housed at CDC. Its initial \$200 million in funding came from the 2021 coronavirus relief package. The center has awarded \$21 million to academic institutions to develop modeling and forecasting methods.

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Citation: CDC launches new forecasting center for infectious diseases (2022, April 19) retrieved 4 June 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2022-04-cdc-center-infectious-diseases.html>

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