OVERVIEW

There is a growing need in the United States to establish comprehensive regional readiness plans against biological attacks and other public health threats, such as highly infectious diseases. The University of Nebraska is a national leader in the training of health care providers, establishing clinical resources, and developing strategies to manage the fight against these emerging infectious disease threats.

University of Nebraska Medical Center (UNMC) has a 30-year history of research funded by the Department of Defense (DoD) to develop medical countermeasures against biologic threats. In 2019, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Assistant Secretary of Preparedness and Response awarded UNMC a contract to develop a regional disaster health response system model that could be replicated by other states. This demonstration contract complements the October 2016, $20 million contract HHS awarded to UNMC to create the HHS National Training, Simulation, and Quarantine Center (TSQC). The quarantine and training services will be managed by the UNMC Global Center for Health Security, an umbrella organization at UNMC that coordinates clinical care, research, and training on a national scale with international collaborations. The Center will operate from its own floor in the advanced simulation building opening this year on UNMC’s campus. The Global Center for Health Security identifies best practices and coordinates an international network of labs and training to defend against emerging highly infectious threats where outbreaks start.

HHS named UNMC a National Ebola Training and Education Center (NETEC) because of its readiness and ability to successfully treat Ebola patients while also training other hospitals. In 2018 the Air Force established the C-STARS (Center for the Sustainment of Trauma and Readiness Skills) Infectious Disease program at UNMC, stationing active duty Air Force personnel on campus to train and work with these UNMC experts. The UNMC Global Center for Health Security builds on the most effective practices demonstrated by UNMC and its domestic and international collaborators.

In 2017, the Global Center for Health Security researchers working through the National Strategic Research Institute (NSRI) at the University of Nebraska successfully launched a drug development pipeline program with the U.S. Armed Forces Radiobiological Research Institute. This initiative is advancing compounds known to mitigate the deadly effects of severe radiation exposure and will speed the advancement of these compounds to clinical trials.
During FY2020, the UNMC Global Center for Health Security will:

- Continue to pursue expanding opportunities as a national leader in readiness with the HHS Office of Assistant Secretary for Preparedness and Response and other federal sponsors;
- Seek authorization from Congress to improve collaboration between federal agencies (DoD, DHS, HHS, and State) in the training of health care providers and the transportation and treatment of patients with highly infectious diseases; and
- Coordinate with NSRI and federal agencies to expand its international network in order to prepare and protect the U.S. against highly infectious diseases and other threats to health.