ETSU hosts Ebola discussion as part of infectious disease course

JOHNSON CITY – East Tennessee State University’s College of Public Health recently hosted an Ebola table-top exercise as part of the Infectious Disease Epidemiology course taught by Dr. Megan Quinn, an assistant professor in the Department of Biostatistics and Epidemiology.

The goal of the exercise was to provide participants with training to improve preparedness for a response to a patient infected with Ebola. The exercise was facilitated by the Sullivan County Regional Health Department’s Office of Emergency Preparedness and Response as well as the Northeast Regional Health Department’s medical director.

Mark Moody, director of the Office of Emergency Preparedness at the Sullivan County Regional Health Department joined Meranda Belcher, regional hospital coordinator, and Sarakay Johnson, medical reserve corps coordinator, to develop scenarios for participants to work through.

Dr. David Kirschke, medical director for the Northeast Regional Health Department and co-instructor of the Infectious Disease Epidemiology course, provided background information on Ebola and an update on current Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommendations and guidelines.

Participants were assigned to groups representing the hospital and the health department. Scenarios regarding a patient appearing to have the Ebola virus were presented and participants were asked to think through various questions such as:

- What actions would be taken with regard to the patient, and who would carry them out?
- What travel history questions would you ask?
- What contact tracing questions would you ask?
- Who needs to be contacted with the information collected from the interview with the patient?
- What isolation procedures would be enacted?
- What personal protective equipment (PPE) measures would be considered? What information is reported?
- What is the expected role of the CDC?
- What other duties would/could be expected of the Health Department?

Approximately 40 people participated in the exercise. Participants included undergraduate and graduate students, faculty and staff, and community members. Andrew Worley and Kathy Kelley from ETSU’s Emergency Management Department were also present and answered questions regarding ETSU’s preparedness and response plans.

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