



Vincent Lafronza:

Greetings from a sunny December day in Arlington, Virginia. On behalf of the National Network of Public Health Institutes, I'm honored to welcome our listeners today as we have a very special guest. I am Vincent Lafronza and I have the honor and privilege of serving as NNPHI's President and CEO. Representing and partnering with 45 public health institutes with more than 8,000 subject matter experts and our nation's regional public health training centers. NNPHI's mission focuses expressly on promoting multi-sector activities resulting in measurable improvements in public health systems, structures, and outcomes. So in a nutshell, we build muscles to strengthen our public health system and we use public-private partnership approaches to protect and improve the public's health. And today I'm joined by Dr. Tim Landers, Associate Professor at the Ohio State University College of Nursing. And today we're talking about evidence-based infection prevention and control, which is also known as IPC.

Vincent Lafronza:

Dr. Landers is an international expert on this topic, and I have an eight-page CV in front of me so that if I read the whole thing, we would have no time for our full discussion. So I suggest we dive right in, but I'll just say, Tim, congratulations on your amazing professional achievements and all you have contributed and contribute to the public's health. You also have the distinction, Tim today of being the first guest in our new NNPHI podcast series. So, thanks again for your willingness to help us strengthen the muscles of our vast public health system. This is certainly right topic to cover in light of what we're learning from this global pandemic.

Vincent Lafronza:

So, today we're also talking about project first-line CDC's national training, collaborative for infection prevention and control, which is committed to preparing frontline health workers and the public health workforce to protect themselves, their patients, their communities, and others from an infectious disease threat. NNPHI and our national partners are committed to connecting the public health workforce with IPC training resources, they need to help healthcare workers, protect patients, and the public. Project Firstline is a CDC led national training collaborative of healthcare and public health partners that aim to improve the nation's response to COVID-19 and other infectious diseases. So, let's dive in Tim, and maybe you can share with our listeners, why is infection control especially important during the COVID-19 pandemic?

Dr. Tim Landers:

What a great question. Yeah. What a great question. Thank you. Infection prevention and control is always important and we've known certainly in health care that many of the advances that we kind of take for granted now with our healthcare system rely on infection prevention and control. The ability to do something fairly straightforward, like open up someone's abdomen and removing appendix that's inflamed relies on that patient, not getting an infection after surgery. And the same thing with any other surgery. For cancer-treating with chemotherapeutics, or with radiation requires that patients not be at risk for an infection. So, we've known this for a long time, but I think what's interesting about the pandemic is we've seen how reliant our society, our economy, our educational system is on infection prevention and control. Kind of what we've been preaching in IPC all along is that this has to be the foundation. And now we're seeing it, not just in healthcare, but really across all sectors of our society. So, it's a great time to be launching Project Firstline and to drum up more interest in infection prevention and control.

Vincent Lafronza:

Terrific. So Tim, how is CDC's Project Firstline supporting healthcare workers and public health professionals directly in the response?

Dr. Tim Landers:

So, that's great, and you mentioned two major audiences of Project Firstline, health care workers, frontline clinicians, and public health professionals. And what we've seen in infection prevention for years is that often those two groups don't speak the same language. They don't have the same culture. And so sometimes it's been difficult to bridge those gaps between and among colleagues with environmental health, with our public health authorities at the local state and federal levels, with those clinicians who are providing direct healthcare services. So, that's really the goal, I think of Project Firstline is to get all the groups talking about infection prevention and control. And so along the way CDC has partnered with experts, with leading organizations in the field, including NNPHI to develop training resources that address really critically important gaps.

Vincent Lafronza:

Wow. That's great. We do need these resources out there. So, what is your role in supporting NNPHI with Project Firstline specifically?

Dr. Tim Landers:

Yeah, thanks. My background is in nursing and in public health and my passion, my life's work is really infection prevention, from hand hygiene to antibiotic resistance, training professionals to increase their competency. And it's been interesting working with NNPHI who brings the very strong public health focus, which I have as well, but then trying to merge that with my passion and my interest in these topics and infection prevention and control. While we often think of infection prevention as being fairly straightforward, right?

Dr. Tim Landers:

Our moms taught us to wash our hands. It's not so easy and it's not straightforward. You can tell people to wear a mask until the cows come home, but getting them to use masks and other measures that we know are effective at preventing the transmission of coronavirus in particular, but other organisms as well. But that's the whole art, right? And we're constantly learning new things about infection prevention and control. And so I think as these partnerships get developed, and as we increase the dialogue in the conversation, I'm excited to see the next level, right. What does that tell us about what we need to learn more about and what we should be doing differently?

Vincent Lafronza:

Yeah. Right on and leads right into my next question. What assistance can you offer public health departments and the public health sector as a whole, as the pandemic continues?

Dr. Tim Landers:

Well, there are a couple of things that we've been doing through NNPHI and Project Firstline. One of which is there are a lot of resources out there and you could spend all day, right, many of us do surfing the web for the latest coronavirus advice and guidance. But what I think one of the things that we can

offer is a curated collection of subject matter information, that's really been tailored to public health and direct frontline providers trying to get them the information that they need when they need it, so that they don't have to do into a Google search and get 200,000 hits. So, that's one of the things that I think is particularly important for NNPHI's engagement in Project Firstline. And then just getting the word out there.

Dr. Tim Landers:

Anyone could do a Google search, but in the current pandemic, we're often so busy, right, that finding those high-quality resources that address the needs that public health professionals have and that frontline clinicians have, I think is really important. In addition, we will be identifying gaps in our responses and in infection prevention and control activities and developing resources to address those gaps, whether it's gaps in knowledge, or practice, or implementation science. So, it's really ... as difficult as the pandemic has been for those of us in public health, for those of us in infection prevention, this is like the perfect opportunity, right, for us to come together. We have increased attention in society and so this is a great time to keep hammering home that message. And it is important for the pandemic for sure, but the improvements in the public health workforce around infection prevention and control will pay dividends way, way down the road.

Vincent Lafronza:

Well, that's fantastic. So, we can look forward to just in time resources and high-quality resources, that I know the public health community will appreciate those. And we're really in great hands with your support Tim, and I can't thank you enough. We are in great support of your work, and we look forward to learning more as we collaborate with CDC and the numerous Project Firstline national partners. I do invite our listeners to learn more about Project Firstline by visiting our website nnphi.org, just click on Project Firstline section, and you will see our posted updated materials and resource links there.

Vincent Lafronza:

All training materials will be, of course, free and open source. If you have specific technical questions for us on any IPC topic, you can email Dr. Tim Landers directly at tlanders@nnphi.org. Tim, thanks again. And I look forward to our work on strengthening the nation's IPC muscle, so we can be better prepared to prevent and control infectious disease for generations to come. Special thanks to our listeners and for all those on the front lines out there. Thank you for your service to the public's health and wellbeing. Bye for now, until our next podcast. Stay well, everyone.