



Episode 6: Basic Understanding of Governing Bodies

What agency provides guidance vs regulation?

The agencies that provide guidance are the CDC, NIOSH and the WHO. (The WHO is not part of the US government) The CDC has a few locations around the world to provide assistance when outbreaks occur to find the source and implement control measures. NIOSH is actually a branch of the CDC and not OSHA as some believe.

Regulating bodies of government are FDA, EPA and OSHA. At times there are differences of opinion between recommending and regulatory bodies.

What are the bodies of government that effect infection prevention and safety?

In the US, the Centers for Disease Control known as the CDC provides recommendations for a variety of things from the prevention of healthcare associated infections to prevention of boating accidents and shooting accidents. The CDC provide assistance with outbreak investigations to hospitals and state and local governments, not just in the US but around the world. CDC provides guidance based upon evidence, peer reviewed published literature.

OSHA regulates safety equipment, ex. which type of mask is to be worn for certain respiratory diseases or a mask worn when working in an industrial setting, a coal mine. While the CDC and NIOSH, will research and make recommendations/guidance. While it is a recommending body, it is considered an expert or authority on many topics. There are times when there is conflict between the different agencies.

How does the CDC's role different from EPA's? (especially during COVID-19...how has it been?)

As a branch of federal government that provides recommendations, the CDC will provide direction to healthcare organizations, public health and government as to what measures of control need to be put into place to mitigate the risk of transmission and will often manage pandemics, epidemics and outbreaks. They also collect and analyze data to make ongoing recommendations as things continue to change. Ideally, decisions are based scientifically, but when you are in the middle of an outbreak, some decisions are based upon what is known at a point in time as well as what is not known but may be logical. It can be a Work in progress...



On the other hand, what comes from the EPA, is actually law not guidance. For example, for disinfectants to be used in the outbreak, the EPA started out with stating that a disinfectant on List N had to be used for cleaning/disinfection during the outbreak. This requirement is made based on the facts that disinfectant manufacturer's had already performed and submitted test results to the EPA regarding the performance of the disinfectant against Enveloped and Non-enveloped viruses.

As the crisis has continued, they have added additional chemistries to the list even though they have not undergone rigorous testing, however, they have had some tests performed against either an enveloped or a non-enveloped virus.

What is the difference between OSHA and NIOSH?

OSHA develops and implements regulations related to safety in the work place, from construction to healthcare. OSHA will conduct inspections and are able to fine employers for lack of workplace safety/health programs.

NIOSH is an institution that conducts research and investigations of issues in the work place. When complaints are submitted to OSHA and an investigation is needed to assess the validity of the complaint and evaluate recommendations, NIOSH performs the investigation.

Do the CDC and the WHO collaborate?

WHO and the CDC generally collaborate and both provide guidance.

On an international scope the World Health Organization, WHO, helps to coordinate efforts when and if there is an international threat to the health of individuals around the globe or isolated areas. The WHO is an agency of the United Nations and headquartered in Geneva, Switzerland. The CDC is part of the US government, but has 61 sites around the globe helping to address health issues. Their work is ongoing to bring help where it is so desperately needed in developing countries or areas that have been affected by drought, famine and disease.

What are the differences between what the EPA regulates vs FDA?

The Food and Drug Administration provides over site tobacco, food, medical products, i.e. new drugs coming to market, evaluating the research that has been submitted. In addition, they evaluate new medical devices to be sure that they perform as the manufacturer states their intended use.

Reports are made to the FDA if there are equipment malfunctions, or issues with drugs and will announce a recall of a product/medication as needed.

Their scope is very broad.



The EPA, Environmental Protection Agency, is another governmental agency organization with broad oversight. This includes emissions from motor vehicles, chemical plants, dumping of waste into bodies of water, asbestos issues, agriculture, construction, etc. If a chemical and/or emission can potential impact the environment, this agency is supposed to protect the environment and ultimately the health of people. This covers approval and registration of disinfectants used in healthcare.

A distinction is that the FDA regulates hand sanitizers and High Level disinfectants.