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Real-Life *Contagion* Stories
New APHL Book Reveals Heroism of H1N1 Pandemic Response and Recommends Key Measures for Continued Public Safety

Silver Spring, MD – The Association of Public Health Laboratories (APHL) today released *Lessons from a Virus: Public Health Laboratories Respond to the H1N1 Pandemic*. The book highlights the stories of the individual heroes in the 2009 pandemic response – including laboratorians, school nurses, scientists, virologists, and many more – as they raced to prevent the spread of the novel influenza virus with historic speed. Beyond chronicling these accomplishments, the publication also sheds light on important ways to improve the public health laboratory system to address future dangers.

“The H1N1 outbreak is an excellent example of how laboratories, federal partners, and health organizations worked together under pressure to respond quickly to a threat,” said Victor Waddell, PhD, President of APHL and Chief of the Arizona Bureau of Laboratory Services. “What the general public might not realize is that vital public health work happens every day – and sometimes through the night. Maintaining and advancing the system we have in place is essential for the rapid response required to prevent and contain a future outbreak.”

While the system’s rapid-response capability is dependent upon resources and funding, the CDC Public Health Emergency Preparedness cooperative agreement – the main funding source for laboratories – has been reduced by over \$350 million since FY 02.

“Now is the time for policy-makers, federal partners, and the public to affirm the value of an efficient public health laboratory network,” said Scott J. Becker, MS, Executive Director of APHL. “I hope this collection of stories, combined with National Preparedness messaging and films like *Contagion*, will underscore the necessity of maintaining and strengthening laboratory services. Few people are aware that we all depend on these services every day to protect our health.”

The stories in *Lessons from a Virus* were compiled by a panel of laboratory and influenza experts with the help of staff from CDC and APHL. They touch on laboratory technology, public health communication strategies, workforce shortages, and the federal, local,

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national and international partnerships that played a role in the 2009 response. For more information, including the complete electronic version of *Lessons from a Virus*, visit www.aphl.org.

The Association of Public Health Laboratories is a national non-profit located in Silver Spring, MD, that is dedicated to working with members to strengthen governmental laboratories with a public health mandate. By promoting effective programs and public policy, APHL strives to provide public health laboratories with the resources and infrastructure needed to protect the health of US residents and to prevent and control disease globally.

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