OpenWHO.org is the World Health Organization’s first platform to integrate massive open online learning concepts into emergency response. Successfully launched in June 2017, it now caters to more than 28,000 individual users, targeting frontline health workers.

Emergency knowledge resources

One of OpenWHO’s experimental practices of training frontline workers for health emergency response prior to deployment. Essential technical guidance is compiled into an easy-to-use online course format, consisting of video, audio and critical source documents in local languages.

Key findings from three recent outbreaks

Ebola in Democratic Republic of the Congo (May 2017) [2]

Ebola materials repurposed from West Africa context to DRC. Translation of materials into French & Lingala.

Pneumonic plague in Madagascar (Oct 2017) [3]

Knowledge resources adapted from existing plague materials in French, English & Malagasy.

Diphtheria in the refugee setting of Cox’s Bazar, Bangladesh (Dec 2017) [4]

Training clinicians caring for patients during outbreaks in vulnerable settings such as Cox’s Bazar.

Data shows rapid enrolment in the Ebola (FR) and Diphtheria courses in the first 7 days after publishing, while user numbers for the other three courses started to grow faster on Day 7, followed by a linear increase until Day 30 when the outbreak started to wind down.

The number of enrolments in the Diphtheria course slowed during the second week, but increased dramatically starting from Day 14. An increase in user traffic from Yemen could be observed, possibly due to simultaneous outbreaks in the country.

The user analysis also revealed that participants represented a diverse range of neighboring countries at risk of potential outbreaks.

Number of user enrolments from neighbouring countries and territories at risk of plague outbreaks.

Map source: WHO Regional Office for Africa

Challenges & future research

Page loading

Learning effectiveness still depends greatly on local internet speed. Loading a course landing page in Europe takes an average of 3 seconds; in countries like Madagascar, this can take 24.9 seconds. Improving user performance with limited internet access is a priority.

Image source: Google analytics

Further research

1) Live streaming function
2) Automated translation
3) Produce emergency courses directly in the WHO regions and countries

References