As a follow-up to the inaugural federal workshop hosted in September, the National Center for Disaster Medicine and Public Health co-sponsored the Education and Training Needs for Disaster Medicine and Public Health Preparedness Workshop as a means to spark discussion between federal and non-federal stakeholders.

The workshop, held from May 5-6 in Gaithersburg, MD, was subtitled, “Building Consensus, Understanding and Capabilities” and was designed as the first of six workshops planned to bring influential members together from federal programs, local and state agencies, universities and professional organizations to update each other on specific activities, training and integration strategies. This national dialogue is critical for shaping the academic Joint Program in Disaster Medicine and Public Health as required by Homeland Security Presidential Directive 21.

With the Yale New Haven Center for Emergency Preparedness and Disaster Response (under contract from U.S. Northern Command) as the primary sponsor, and the Federal Education and Training Interagency Group (FETIG) as an additional co-sponsor, the conference was broken down into four breakout sessions: Workforce Learning Requirements and Needs, Disconnects and Barriers, Information and Communication, and Capabilities and Competencies—which was facilitated by the NCDMPH’s acting director, Dr. Kenneth Schor.

Although the discussions in each session took on lives of their own, a common theme among all participants was the disaster medicine and public health workforce needs to develop a common lexicon, which was also a key finding from the inaugural federal workshop (see Page 3). Each session also contained topic-specific survey questions presented and discussed in a plenary session on day two of the workshop.
Recent Earthquakes Underscore Importance of NCDMPH Vision

As Haiti begins the long process of rebuilding a country devastated by a magnitude 7.0 earthquake, the United States should look inward to measure the success of its aid efforts abroad and to examine its preparedness should such a catastrophe occur at home.

The severe damage caused by the earthquake inspired an overwhelming response from all over the world—an estimated $14.9 billion was donated, and more than 20 countries sent military personnel, and countless non-government and for-profit organizations sent contingents of people to help with relief efforts. With such a wide-ranging collection of governments, teams and organizations coming together, communication and a common understanding of disaster medicine and public health are of the utmost importance.

For the NCDMPH to achieve its vision of a “Nation of resilient communities with a competent health workforce prepared to respond and mitigate all-hazards disasters,” there must be effective communication and collaboration between all types of organizations who will respond to disaster. One step toward achieving this goal can be found in the inaugural proceedings from the NCDMPH’s first federal workshop (see Page 3) —the need to develop standard nomenclature among all disciplines and levels.

“One of the most fundamental aspects of coordinating different organizations is the ability to have a basic understanding of terms and the naming of procedures,” says Dr. Kenneth Schor, Acting Director of the NCDMPH. “By developing a standardized lexicon for all-hazards disasters, we can eliminate misunderstandings, and maximize the number of lives saved in the preciously short time we have.”

On a more basic level, the success of the partnership between sectors, civilians and military of different countries determines how many lives can be saved and how much suffering can be averted. The team-building competencies that the NCDMPH plans to develop will allow responders to be better prepared for working in a collaborative environment.

With the earthquake in Haiti being quickly followed by damaging earthquakes in Chile and Tibet, the need for improved preparedness is given even greater urgency. As the NCDMPH begins work on better preparing the United States’ health workforce for such a disaster, it is important that the lessons learned from these disasters are not lost. The needs for a standardized language of operation during a disaster and team-performance competencies will further prepare our country to respond domestically and abroad to the next disaster.
Inaugural Workshop Proceedings Released

On September 24-25, 2009, the NCDMPH hosted its inaugural federal workshop, “A Nation Prepared: Education and Training Needs for Disaster Medicine and Public Health.” Now, the NCDMPH is releasing the proceedings from the workshop, which include key findings, data results from small group sessions and some recommendations for future opportunities for the NCDMPH to pursue.

One of the clearest findings from the workshop was the need for a standard nomenclature across all disciplines and levels. The importance of this conclusion is highlighted by the need to effectively collaborate and communicate in all-hazards situations that attract responders from varying sectors, such as the recent devastating earthquakes (see page 2). The use of a common lexicon can also create an integrated response.

Other key findings include the idea that mandates are the most efficient way to implement education and training changes in the field and in-person training is the preferred method of learning, but distance learning is becoming a viable secondary option due to the cost-cutting realities across the board.

Full data results from a post-workshop survey, as well as full data tables from anonymous information-gathering sessions are also included in the comprehensive appendices section.

To read the full text of the inaugural proceedings, please visit the “Fall 2009 Workshop” area of the Resources section of our website, or e-mail NCDMPH@gmail.com to request a copy.

New Headquarters Opened in Rockville

After being temporarily housed at the Henry M. Jackson Foundation for the Advancement of Military Medicine since its inception in 2008, the National Center for Disaster Medicine and Public Health officially opened the doors to its new center in Rockville, MD, on January 25, 2010.

The new offices, located in Suite 1000 at 11300 Rockville Pike, give the National Center space to host meetings, expand its staff and develop networking capabilities.

The NCDMPH’s acting director, joint program coordinator, communications associate, administrative assistant and future staff will work from the new headquarters, while the Center’s webmaster will continue to reside at the Uniformed Services University, a few miles up the road.

The NCDMPH looks forward to settling into these new offices and welcomes visitors. Please call ahead to make visiting arrangements at (240) 833-4444.
The NCDMPH is happy to introduce the newest addition to the staff, David Berry, who was hired as a Communications Associate in December.

As the communications associate for the Center, Mr. Berry is responsible for managing the internal and external communication mechanisms used by the Center, including the website, printed materials, advertisements and this newsletter. Mr. Berry will also be attending numerous conferences on behalf of the NCDMPH with the specific goal of increasing the Center’s presence in public and private sectors.

Mr. Berry comes to the Center after most recently servicing the public relations needs for a variety of non-profit and issues-based clients at GMMB, a full-service communications firm in Washington, DC. Prior to that, Mr. Berry was employed at MCS Public Relations in his native New Jersey.

Mr. Berry is a graduate of the University of Maryland and currently resides in Washington, DC. He can be reached at dberry@hjf.org.