

For Immediate Use

May 20, 2011

New Global Bio Lab unveiled at UCLA

Sarah Anderson, sanderson@ph.ucla.edu
310-267-0440

UCLA's [Global Bio Lab](#), which has the potential to significantly increase our nation's ability to respond quickly to a bioterrorist attack, flu pandemic or other bio-emergency, celebrated its grand opening today.

With initial, congressionally directed funding from the U.S. Department of Defense and the California Emergency Management Agency, the UCLA School of Public Health collaborated with Los Alamos National Laboratory to develop the facility, a first-of-its-kind high-speed, high-volume automated lab that can rapidly process biohazardous samples.

"In an era in which infectious diseases can spread faster than at any time in history, coupled with the possibility of a wide-scale bioterrorist attack, there is an urgent need to provide real-time, accurate and comprehensive information at the first hint of a problem," said Linda Rosenstock, dean of the UCLA School of Public Health. "The Global Bio Lab at UCLA provides a new tool in combating serious infectious diseases."

When it reaches full capacity, the facility will be capable, for example, of fully characterizing thousands of influenza samples per year. In emergency response mode — during an outbreak or pandemic — it will be able to process and partially characterize thousands of samples per day and enable 24/7 surge operations. And the lab will also provide critical cutting-edge training for the future public health workforce.

The grand opening celebration was attended by various luminaries, including U.S. House Democratic Leader Nancy Pelosi, U.S. Rep. Henry A. Waxman, UCLA Chancellor Gene Block, Rosenstock and Cindy Horn, a member of the Dean's Advisory Board at the School of Public Health, who was instrumental in helping to secure the necessary support to launch the lab.

"Investments in UCLA's Global Bio Lab are an investment in our nation — in our public health, homeland security, science and innovation," Pelosi said. "We know that the security of our country starts with the health of our people, and this lab will enable us to respond

quickly, immediately and effectively to health emergencies, pandemics and bioterrorist attacks."

Infectious diseases are the leading cause of acute human illness, lost productivity and death worldwide. The possibility of a pandemic has been elevated in recent years, not only by the threat of bioterrorism but because of crowded living conditions and increased travel, which can result in a virus in a remote village being quickly transported around the world, infecting millions of people.

Rapid detection of emerging infectious diseases is critical to halting and containing their spread. The UCLA Global Bio Lab will be able to implement near-real-time global surveillance of infectious diseases by integrating high-throughput laboratory testing and analysis with population-based surveillance activities and basic infectious diseases research.

"The high-throughput, high-capacity nature of this laboratory permits rapid processing of multiple biosamples in a way that is unprecedented and critical for scientists working on the front line," Rosenstock said.

The UCLA School of Public Health is dedicated to enhancing the public's health by conducting innovative research; training future leaders and health professionals; translating research into policy and practice; and serving local, national and international communities.

For more news, visit the [UCLA Newsroom](#) and [UCLA News|Week](#) and follow us on [Twitter](#).