Background: FETP and Its Importance to Global Health Security

A field epidemiology training program (FETP) is a program that builds capacity in health service agencies by providing training in field epidemiology and other public health competencies within the context of health delivery systems. These programs train health workers in field epidemiology so that they can be the “boots on the ground” in the fight against diseases. Field epidemiologists examine diseases at their source and are often referred to as “disease detectives,” collecting, analyzing and interpreting data to help government ministries of health and other agencies respond more effectively during outbreaks. Nearly 80 percent of FETP graduates continue to serve in public health programs in their home countries. More than 80 programs currently operate around the world.

TEPHINET: The Only Global Network of FETPs

Formed in 1997 as FETPs worldwide sought a way to share information and experiences, Training Programs in Epidemiology and Public Health Interventions Network (TEPHINET) is a global network of FETPs, trainees, and graduates. Currently, TEPHINET comprises 72 programs actively training field epidemiologists in more than 100 countries. TEPHINET member programs include those with laboratory and veterinarian education components. Overall, TEPHINET member programs comprise approximately 4,770 current trainees and 14,000 graduates who play a critical role in improving global health security by strengthening country capacity to detect and respond to disease outbreaks and other public health emergencies. With a secretariat based in Atlanta, Georgia, USA and an advisory board of global representatives, TEPHINET is the only global network of FETPs and works closely with regional FETP networks and sub-regional and national programs.

What is TEPHINET’s TEPHIConnect Program?

Launched in August 2017, TEPHIConnect is TEPHINET’s online and mobile networking platform created exclusively for Field Epidemiology Training Program (FETP) alumni. TEPHIConnect is one tool that TEPHINET has to increase engagement with FETP alumni and highlight their work and achievements in order to raise the profile of FETPs worldwide. As its membership grows, TEPHIConnect can have a large impact on public health, not only in countries with FETPs but globally during outbreaks and emergencies. Partnering with WHO and our regional partners, TEPHINET can leverage TEPHIConnect’s network to help roster response teams around the world, as it has during the 2018-2019 Ebola outbreak.


Using TEPHIConnect’s alumni directory, members can search for FETP graduates worldwide based on specific skill-related criteria.
Why is It Important?

TEPHIConnect is the platform that supports TEPHINET’s global community of trained disease detective alumni. Through this platform, TEPHINET can facilitate prompt and quality outbreak response and provide a forum where FETP alumni share their work and collaborate with experts, increase their continuous learning opportunities and become part of an international, coordinated community of epidemiologists and public health professionals ready to make a global impact.

TEPHIConnect’s Impact

Since its launch in August 2017, TEPHIConnect has 3,485+ users in its database, 1,915+ of whom have active accounts. Global surveys have shown that there are approximately 14,000 FETP graduates, indicating that more than 10 percent of graduates signed up for TEPHIConnect in a little over a year. TEPHIConnect has members representing 96 countries and every WHO region.

The TEPHIConnect platform has the functionality to be used not only as a social networking tool by graduates, but also as an alumni tracking and outreach tool for programs—as well as a source of potential responders for deploying agencies including the Global Outbreak Alert and Response Network (GOARN). During the 2018-2019 Ebola, measles, Cyclone Idai, and Nigeria Lassa fever responses, more than 160 FETP alumni have volunteered to deploy through TEPHIConnect, and 14 have completed missions. As 2020 begins, TEPHIConnect is working closely with CDC and WHO to build response teams comprised of FETP alumni who can bring their expertise to the field during critical outbreak response.

Expanding TEPHIConnect

TEPHINET has shown that alumni and programs are interested in TEPHIConnect and continue to sign up. In 2020, TEPHINET’s goals are to:

1. Increase alumni engagement: In addition to increasing alumni sign-ups, TEPHIConnect will continuously seek opportunities for FETP alumni to engage with partners and provide their public health expertise globally. For example, prior to 2019, TEPHIConnect posted more than 50 job opportunities around the world, informed alumni about professional networking opportunities at 17 conferences, and was used for a partner survey on tools that field epidemiologists use for data collection and analysis.

2. Formalize relationships between TEPHIConnect and the regional networks (AFENET, REDSUR, REDCEC, EAN, EMPHNET, SAFENET) and expand their presence on the TEPHIConnect site. This will allow these parties to more efficiently coordinate and respond to public health events and crises.

3. Continue collaborations with outside partners, such as CDC and WHO, to continually hone TEPHIConnect as an efficient tool for identifying qualified epidemiologists for outbreak response.

FETP alumni can register at WWW.TEPHICONNECT.ORG

An FETP graduate signs up for TEPHIConnect during the 9th TEPHINET Global Scientific Conference in August 2017.