



**PMAC** | PRINCE MAHIDOL  
AWARD CONFERENCE **2018**



## **PARALLEL SESSION 2.1**

**BEYOND MERS AND ZIKA: ARE WE PREPARED FOR THE NEXT BIG EPIDEMIC?**



## | BACKGROUND

Over the past decade, Ebola, MERS, highly pathogenic avian influenza and, more recently, the Zika virus outbreaks have demonstrated the ability of epidemics to devastate communities through both extraordinary losses of life and severe morbidity as well as adverse social and economic impacts that jeopardize global health security. These recent disease outbreaks have not only made evident countries' lack of preparedness to adequately prevent, detect and respond to epidemics, but also the extent to which measures must cut across governance levels and all sectors of society in order to truly be effective. Furthermore, only one third of countries have met their commitments under the International Health Regulations (IHR). And although several tools and frameworks have been developed (by WHO, USAID, CDC, OIE, etc.) to provide guidance for countries to develop country epidemic preparedness and response plans, these are generally disease specific, have not been updated or tested through routine exercises, remain largely underfunded and are, therefore, not fully operational. As a result, many countries remain unprepared to prevent, detect, mitigate risks and respond to health threats and disease epidemics before they cause devastating consequences in the livelihoods of communities and the economies of countries.

## | OBJECTIVES

- To present country experiences on strengthening IHR core capacities, including efforts for effective coordination, partnership models and financing mechanisms to strengthen health security.
- To identify critical elements needed for sustainable, inclusive, and effective preparedness at country level and propose solutions for more effective epidemic preparedness guidance.
- To discuss gaps in the current guidance and frameworks that need to be filled to develop country epidemic preparedness and response plans.



Panelist

Cassandra Kelly-Cirino

*Director of Emerging Threats*

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Dr Cassandra Kelly-Cirino, Director of Emerging Threats at FIND, has over 20 years of experience working in Canadian and US public health and private sector settings. Cassandra began her career at the Canadian National Microbiology Laboratory working on emerging infectious diseases, including drug resistant bacteria, viruses and prions. In her 10-year tenure at the Wadsworth Center, New York State Department of Health, Cassandra served as the Deputy Director of the Biodefense Laboratory, a heavily regulated and accredited laboratory. During this time Cassandra also completed a PhD in Immunology and Infectious Diseases and developed vaccine and passive immunotherapeutic candidates for anthrax infections. She engaged national and international stakeholders in the development of public health policy for infectious diseases with a focus on emergency response and preparedness, developed novel diagnostic assays for multiple pathogens, and served as a development partner for commercial companies developing novel tools to combat infectious diseases. Most recently, Cassandra served as Vice President, Infectious Diseases with DNA Genotek, a Canadian company known for its sample stabilization and collection technologies. In this role Cassandra was responsible for multiple initiatives to bring simple collection and stabilization solutions to the global public health and outbreak response fields, including a Tuberculosis product designed specifically for low and middle income countries.