

Global Health Preparedness: Lessons from Recent Pandemics

COMPREHENSION • VOCABULARY • DISCUSSION

INTERACTIVE ONLINE TEST

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Reading Passage

Read the passage carefully. Each paragraph is labelled with a letter for easy reference.

- A** In recent years, the world has faced significant health crises, notably the COVID-19 pandemic that began in late 2019. This global event exposed weaknesses in health systems across many countries, revealing that many were not adequately prepared for such a widespread emergency. For instance, Italy was overwhelmed in the early stages, struggling to provide adequate care as hospitals filled to capacity, leading to difficult decisions about patient care. The rapid spread of the virus highlighted the urgent need for better coordination among nations to combat such threats effectively. Public health experts emphasized the importance of timely data sharing and collaboration to manage outbreaks effectively, stressing that information must flow freely between countries to respond swiftly to emerging health challenges. Lessons learned from COVID-19 stress the necessity for robust health infrastructure and emergency response strategies that can be activated quickly in times of crisis.
- B** Similarly, the Ebola outbreak in West Africa from 2014 to 2016 taught critical lessons about containment and response. Countries like Liberia and Sierra Leone faced immense challenges due to limited resources, inadequate healthcare facilities, and weak infrastructure. International aid was crucial in controlling the outbreak, but it also underscored the importance of local preparedness and the need for countries to build their own capacities. Training healthcare workers and establishing rapid response teams can make a significant difference in future outbreaks, equipping nations to handle health emergencies more effectively. As the world continues to grapple with various health threats, investing in global health preparedness is vital. Countries must prioritize strengthening their health systems, enhancing their ability to respond to pandemics, and ensuring a more resilient response to future health crises.

Vocabulary Glossary

Key words and phrases from the passage. Study them before attempting the exercise below.

WORD / PHRASE	DEFINITION	EXAMPLE SENTENCE
pandemic	a disease that spreads quickly over a large area or the whole world	<i>The flu pandemic affected millions of people around the globe.</i>
adequate	enough or satisfactory for a particular purpose	<i>We have adequate food supplies for the winter.</i>
collaboration	when people work together to achieve a goal	<i>The project was a success because of the collaboration between the teams.</i>
infrastructure	basic systems and services needed for a country or area	<i>The city's infrastructure was damaged by the storm.</i>
containment	keeping something harmful under control or within limits	<i>Containment of the fire was achieved after several hours.</i>
resilient	able to recover quickly from difficult conditions	<i>Children are often more resilient than adults in facing changes.</i>
emergency	a serious or dangerous situation needing immediate action	<i>The hospital is equipped to handle any medical emergency.</i>
response	an action or change that happens as a result of something	<i>Her quick response saved the man's life.</i>

Vocabulary Exercise — Fill in the Blank

Use one word or phrase from the glossary above to complete each sentence. Each item is used only once. Answers are on the final page.

1. During the _____, many countries struggled to provide enough medical care.
2. The project was successful because of the _____ between the two departments.
3. The city had to improve its _____ to prevent future flooding problems.
4. Quick _____ to the accident saved many lives.
5. The fire department worked hard on the _____ of the wildfire.
6. We need more _____ measures to handle unexpected crises.

Comprehension Questions

These questions are different from the online practice test. Choose the best answer (A, B, C, or D). Answers and explanations are on the final page.

Question 1

What was one of the major challenges faced by Liberia and Sierra Leone during the Ebola outbreak?

- A. Lack of international aid
- B. Inadequate healthcare facilities
- C. Overwhelming number of tourists
- D. Too much local preparedness

Question 2

According to the passage, what is a key factor for effectively managing health emergencies?

- A. Rapid response teams
- B. High number of hospitals
- C. Local festivals
- D. Tourism

Question 3

Why is timely data sharing emphasized by public health experts?

- A. It helps in selling medical equipment faster.
- B. It allows countries to respond swiftly to health challenges.
- C. It increases the number of healthcare workers.
- D. It prevents the spread of rumors.

Question 4

What does the passage suggest about the role of international aid during the Ebola outbreak?

- A. It was unnecessary.
- B. It was crucial but highlighted local preparedness needs.
- C. It replaced local healthcare completely.
- D. It was only helpful in major cities.

Question 5

What does the passage identify as a necessary component for future health crisis management?

- A. More tourism
- B. Stronger health systems
- C. Fewer international collaborations
- D. More local festivals

Discussion & Writing Prompts

Each prompt references a specific detail from the passage above. Use for classroom discussion or a short written response (150–200 words).

1. Paragraph A discusses how Italy struggled during the early stages of COVID-19. What factors do you think contributed to this situation, and how could other countries learn from Italy's experience?

2. In Paragraph B, it is mentioned that international aid was crucial during the Ebola outbreak. Do you think reliance on international aid is sustainable for future health crises, or should countries focus more on self-sufficiency?

3. The passage concludes by emphasizing the importance of strengthening health systems. What specific improvements do you think could make a significant impact on a country's health preparedness?

Answer Key

COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

Q1 B

Q2 A

Q3 B

Q4 B

Q5 B

VOCABULARY EXERCISE

FIB1 pandemic

FIB2 collaboration

FIB3 infrastructure

FIB4 response

FIB5 containment

FIB6 resilient

Comprehension Question Explanations

Why the correct answer is right — and why each wrong option is incorrect.

1. What was one of the major challenges faced by Liberia and Sierra Leone during the Ebola outbreak?

✓ B — Inadequate healthcare facilities

The passage states that inadequate healthcare facilities were a challenge for Liberia and Sierra Leone.

✗ A — Lack of international aid

International aid was crucial, not lacking, during the Ebola outbreak.

✗ C — Overwhelming number of tourists

The passage does not mention tourists as a challenge during the outbreak.

✗ D — Too much local preparedness

The passage highlights the need for more local preparedness, not that there was too much of it.

2. According to the passage, what is a key factor for effectively managing health emergencies?

✓ A — Rapid response teams

Rapid response teams are mentioned as important for handling health emergencies effectively.

✗ B — High number of hospitals

The passage does not emphasize the number of hospitals as a key factor.

✗ C — Local festivals

Local festivals are not mentioned as relevant to health emergencies.

✗ D — Tourism

Tourism is not discussed in the context of managing health emergencies.

3. Why is timely data sharing emphasized by public health experts?

✓ B — It allows countries to respond swiftly to health challenges.

Timely data sharing is emphasized for enabling swift responses to emerging health challenges.

✗ A — It helps in selling medical equipment faster.

The passage does not mention selling medical equipment.

✗ C — It increases the number of healthcare workers.

Data sharing is not related to increasing healthcare worker numbers.

✗ D — It prevents the spread of rumors.

Preventing rumors is not the main reason for data sharing mentioned in the passage.

4. What does the passage suggest about the role of international aid during the Ebola outbreak?

✓ **B — It was crucial but highlighted local preparedness needs.**

International aid was crucial and highlighted the need for local preparedness.

✗ **A — It was unnecessary.**

The passage states that international aid was crucial, not unnecessary.

✗ **C — It replaced local healthcare completely.**

International aid did not completely replace local healthcare.

✗ **D — It was only helpful in major cities.**

The passage does not specify that aid was limited to major cities.

5. What does the passage identify as a necessary component for future health crisis management?

✓ **B — Stronger health systems**

The passage emphasizes the need for stronger health systems for future crisis management.

✗ **A — More tourism**

Tourism is not mentioned as a component for health crisis management.

✗ **C — Fewer international collaborations**

The passage actually stresses the importance of international collaboration.

✗ **D — More local festivals**

Local festivals are irrelevant to health crisis management in the passage.

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