

HANDBOOK

EpiCore Training

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH

INTRO

This manual will explain key concepts of EpiCore and provide you step-by-step instructions on how to use the EpiCore system.

By the end of this manual, you should feel comfortable using EpiCore and applying your knowledge and expertise to this innovative global surveillance system.

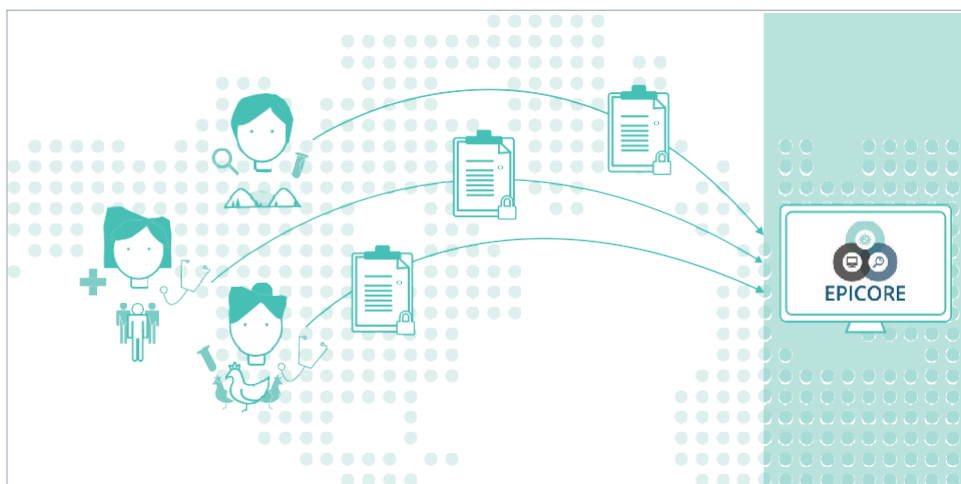
Learning objectives for this course include understanding:

- What EpiCore is;
- Why you should become an EpiCore member and what you will gain from it;
- What a Request for Information is and how to respond to one; and
- How to use EpiCore.

WHAT IS EPICORE?

EpiCore is a new system that finds and reports outbreaks faster than traditional disease surveillance methods alone.

EpiCore draws on the knowledge of a global community of human, animal and environmental health professionals to verify information on disease outbreaks in their geographic regions, and connects them with a secure online networking and reporting system.



By using innovative surveillance techniques and linking local and international health experts, EpiCore enables faster global outbreak detection and reporting.



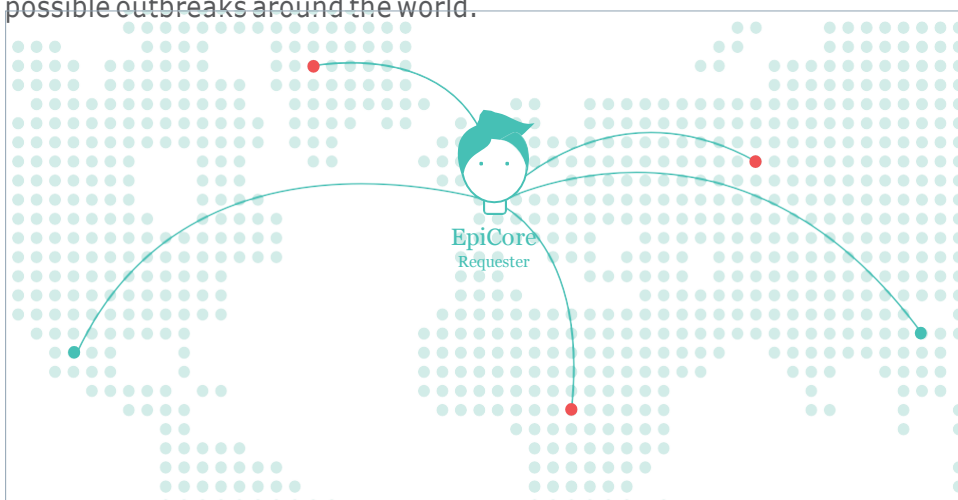
EpiCore Communication

What is EpiCore?

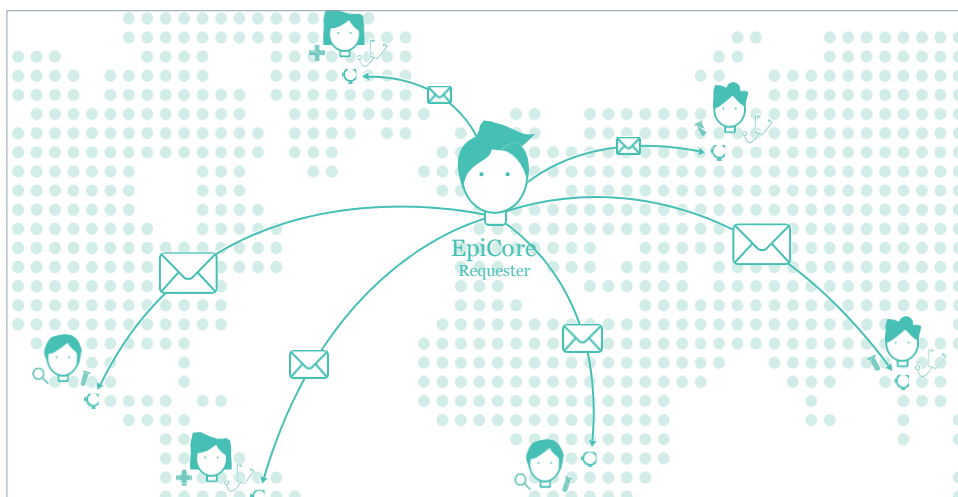
Communication on EpiCore is facilitated by what are called “Requests For Information”, or RFIs for short.



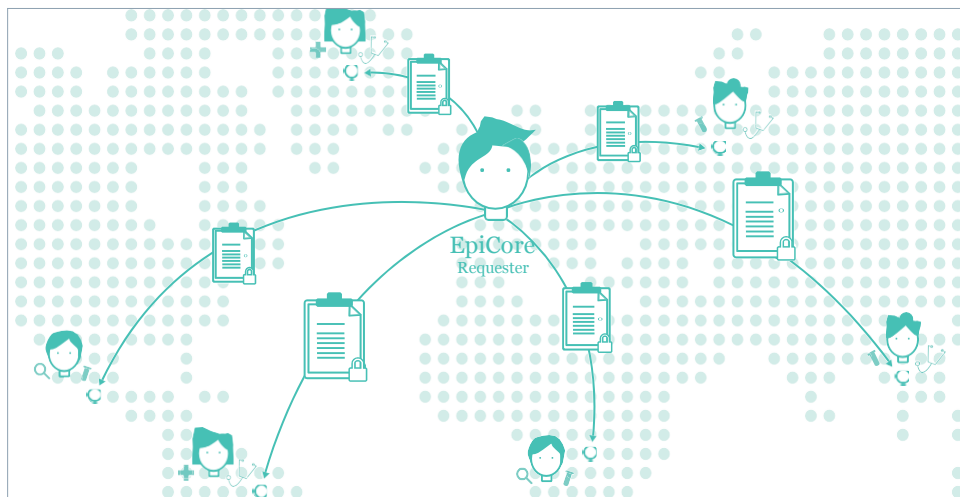
EpiCore requesters (e.g. analysts from ProMED or HealthMAP or potentially other reputed surveillance teams), look for leads regarding possible outbreaks around the world.



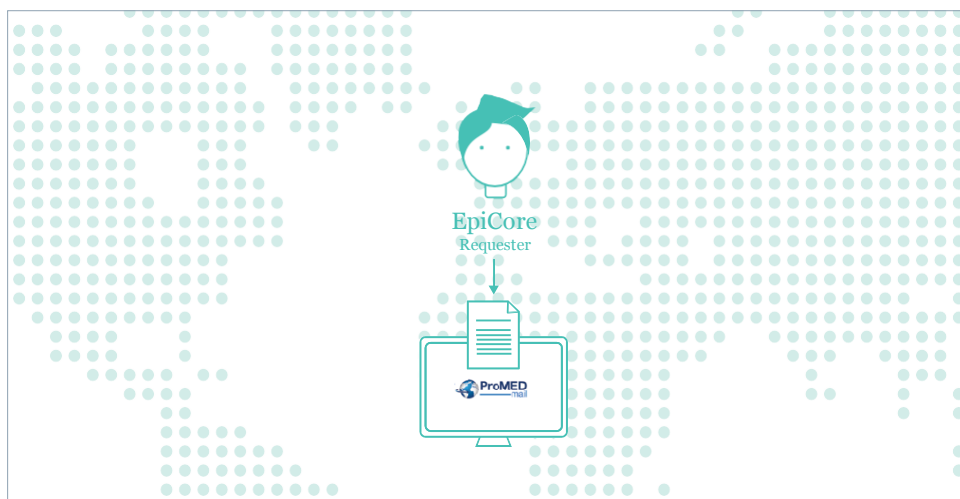
When evidence of an outbreak is found, EpiCore requesters will send an RFI to request verification from EpiCore members in that geographic region.



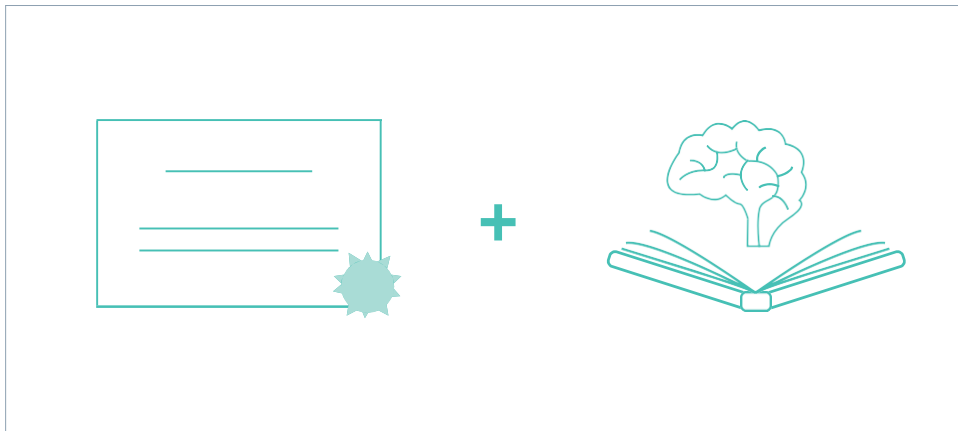
Through a secure online platform, members are able to easily and quickly provide local expertise which speeds outbreak verification.



The information collected through EpiCore is then shared the EpiCore dashboard as a event summary as well as shared via dissemination channels of the requesters. For example, on ProMED-mail, which is a free, nonpolitical system that has an open and public worldwide distribution.



In addition to receiving RFIs from the ProMED-mail requesters, you might occasionally receive RFIs from experts at HealthMap, or other surveillance networks in the future.



There are certain minimum credentials EpiCore members need to have. These include a degree in the human or animal health fields, which could be human or veterinary medicine, nursing, microbiology, or a similarly relevant field, plus a knowledge of the basic principles of epidemiology, infectious disease, and/or related fields.

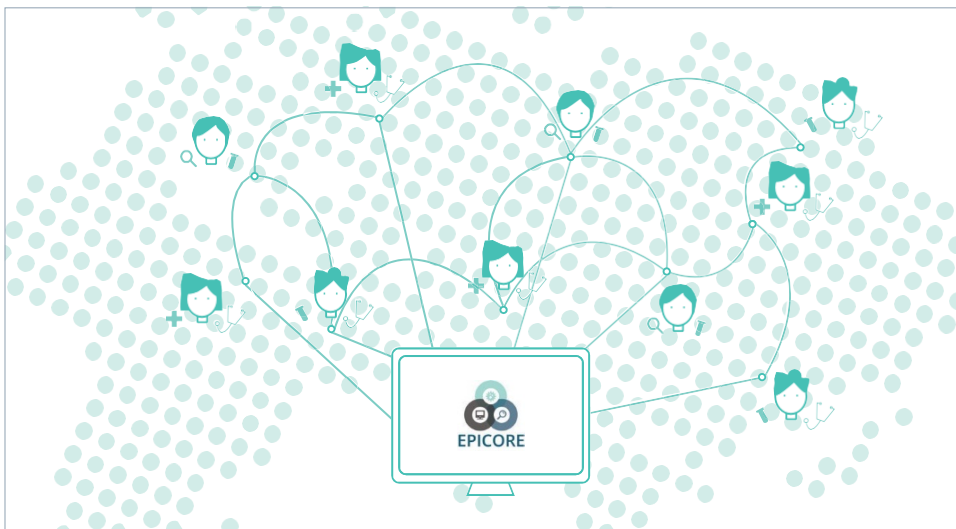
All EpiCore members must have at least 2 of the following qualifications:

- An advanced degree in Public Health or a related field (e.g. MPH)
- Health professional certification or licensure (e.g. MD, DVM, RN)
- At least 3 years of experience in human, animal, or environmental health
- Current affiliation with a medical center, university, Ministry of Health, Department of Health, or other health-related organization including NGOs & private sector organizations
- Successful completion of a Field Epidemiology Training Program

WHY SHOULD YOU BECOME AN EPICORE MEMBER?

Let us start by mentioning that only qualified and experienced health professionals are selected. As a member, you will be part of an exclusive and elite cohort.

The benefits from participating are numerous and vary in magnitude by country and region. For example, for some countries that do not have a comprehensive disease surveillance system in place, EpiCore helps health professionals in one area or sector to be aware of any outbreaks in other areas or sectors of the country or other regions.



Additionally, some countries do not regularly or consistently share surveillance information with neighboring countries due to linguistic, cultural, or even political barriers, which do not stop pathogens from crossing borders. EpiCore helps health officials and professionals in these countries learn about potential outbreaks nearby. This information can help them initiate life-saving preparation and control measures.

In our globalized world, it can even be beneficial to know about outbreaks thousands of miles away allowing health officials around the world to appropriately prepare to receive travelers from affected countries, and to monitor new cases.

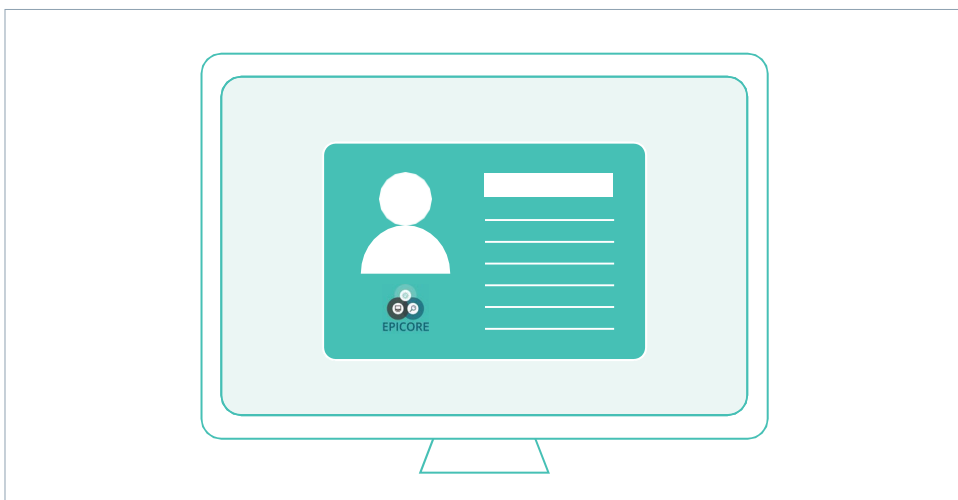
It will also help you, as an EpiCore member, to make sure that the correct information about potential outbreaks in your country is shared with the rest of the world.

Why should you become an active EpiCore member?



If, for example, you received a request that you know has inaccurate or irrelevant information or is based on a false rumor, you can help make sure that the correct information is being disseminated.

The key is that increased reporting improves our knowledge of what is going on around us. This helps us **all** to be more prepared.



Our EpiCore members can help protect people in their communities, countries, regions and across the globe. Your participation in EpiCore is critical in helping to stop epidemics and save lives. You will help change the landscape of disease surveillance by becoming an EpiCore member! In return, what is needed from you as an EpiCore member is simply your knowledge and **a very small amount of your time!** For our members, EpiCore truly embodies a “small commitment, big impact” approach.

RFIs AND THE PROMED REQUESTERS

RFIs

Previously, we mentioned the requests for information (or RFIs) that will be sent via the EpiCore system to its members. Next, we will explain where RFIs come from, and the purpose they serve as part of EpiCore.

Requesters

As we mentioned earlier, RFIs are ~~currently~~ sent by a group of experts from ProMED-mail or HealthMap or potentially other reputed surveillance teams. These experts are carefully selected infectious disease specialists based around the world. They are trained to recognize possible outbreaks of public health significance.

They continuously monitor nontraditional information sources and publish reports on emerging and re-emerging diseases from all over the world.



ProMED

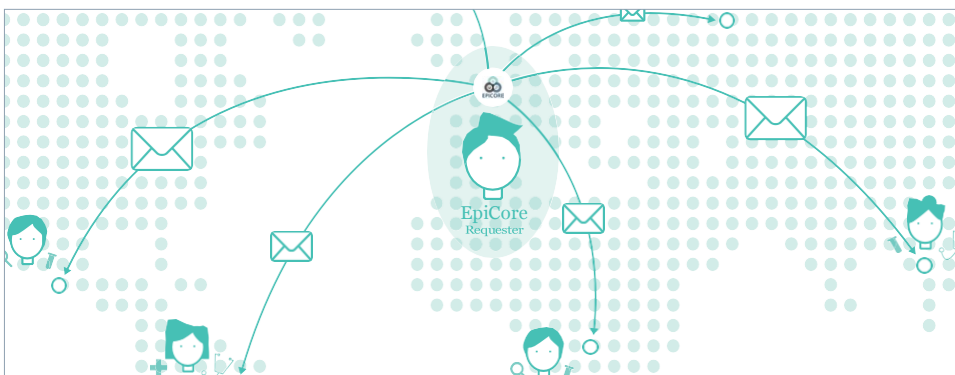
ProMED-mail, or simply ProMED, is an internet-based reporting system that is dedicated to the rapid, global dissemination of information on infectious diseases outbreaks and acute exposures to toxins that affect human health, including those in plants and animals that are grown for human consumption. ProMED's reports are published online and include expert commentary. These reports are accessible on the ProMED website and are sent by email to its continually growing list of 80,000 subscribers.

HealthMAP

HealthMap brings together disparate data sources, including online news aggregators, eyewitness reports, expert-curated discussions and validated official reports, to achieve a unified and comprehensive view of the current global state of infectious diseases and their effect on human and animal health. Through an automated process, updating 24/7/365, the system monitors, organizes, integrates, filters, visualizes and disseminates online information about emerging diseases, facilitating early detection of global public health threats.

Conclusion

To summarize, RFIs are the method of communication used by EpiCore and are sent to EpiCore members by the EpiCore requesters.



You can respond to any RFI you receive to correct or fill in missing, vital information – or to verify outbreak information received from an informal source.

The information or verification you are able to provide means that more accurate news of this potential outbreak will reach those who need it more quickly, and could help the affected area avoid an epidemic.

RFI's and the Requesters

LINKS TO EXPLORE

Explore the ProMED website and, while on the site, try to find a post about your country or a neighboring country.

[www.promedmail.org]

Also, here is a link you can use to know more about requesters

[<http://www.promedmail.org/aboutus/whoswho/>]

Did you find a report about your country or a neighboring country?

Now imagine a similar post on a possible outbreak in your country or region, only it is missing vital information or simply has incorrect information. This is when you get a chance to verify outbreak information.

QUESTION

True or False:

ProMED is free of charge, open to everyone and is non-political.

Information you should provide in an RFI

RFI's and the Requesters

Here are some examples of the types of information that can be used in an RFI response:

Information on **PERSON**, such as:

- Demographics (age, gender, etc.)
- Case numbers
- Fatalities
- Lab results
- Diagnosis
- Pathogen(s)
- Supporting information

Information on **PLACE**, such as:

- the location of patient(s)

And information on **TIME**, such as:

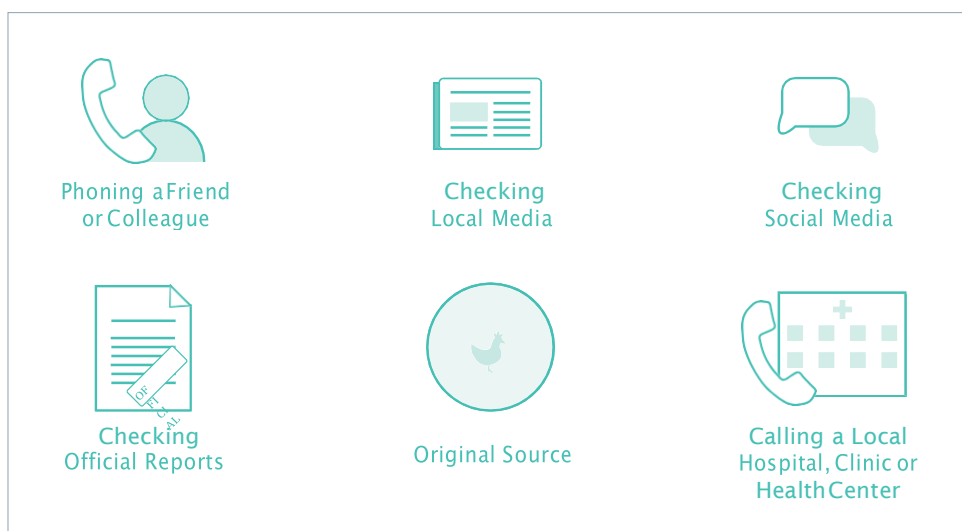
- the date of occurrence(s)

Remember! Some information is better than no information!

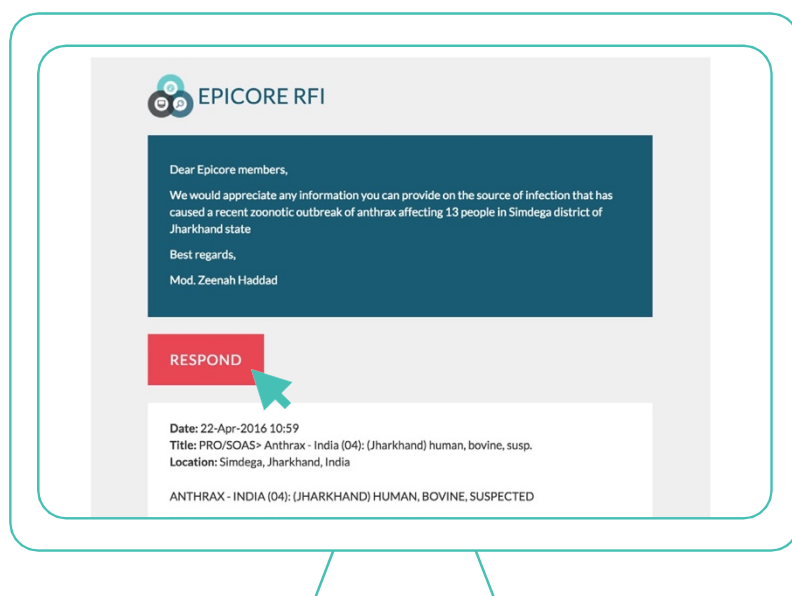


You might already know the information you want to use in your response, but you may also decide to gather or reinforce your information by:

- Phoning a friend or a colleague
- Checking local media, like newspapers, radio, TV, etc.
- Checking social media in your local language or in your country for any trends on the disease or symptoms
- Checking official reports
- Going back to the original source
- Calling a local hospital, clinic, or health center



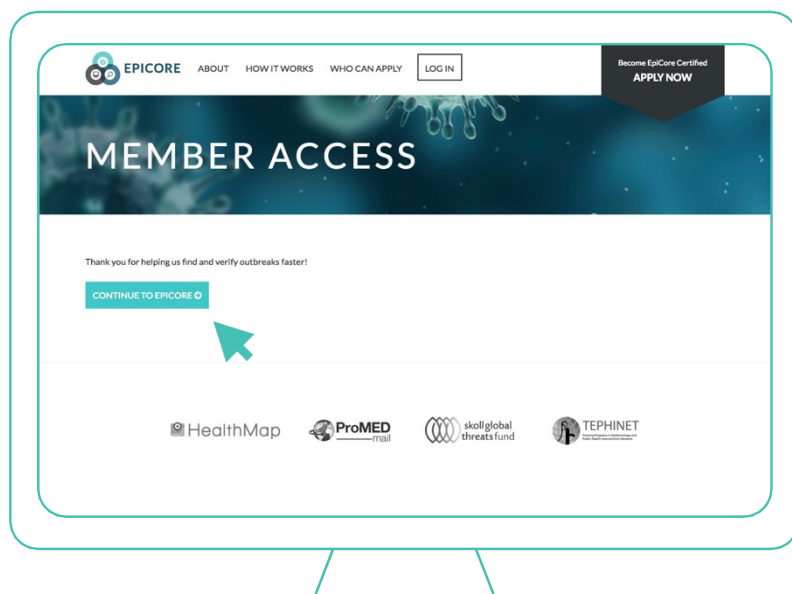
HOW TO USE THE EPICORE PLATFORM



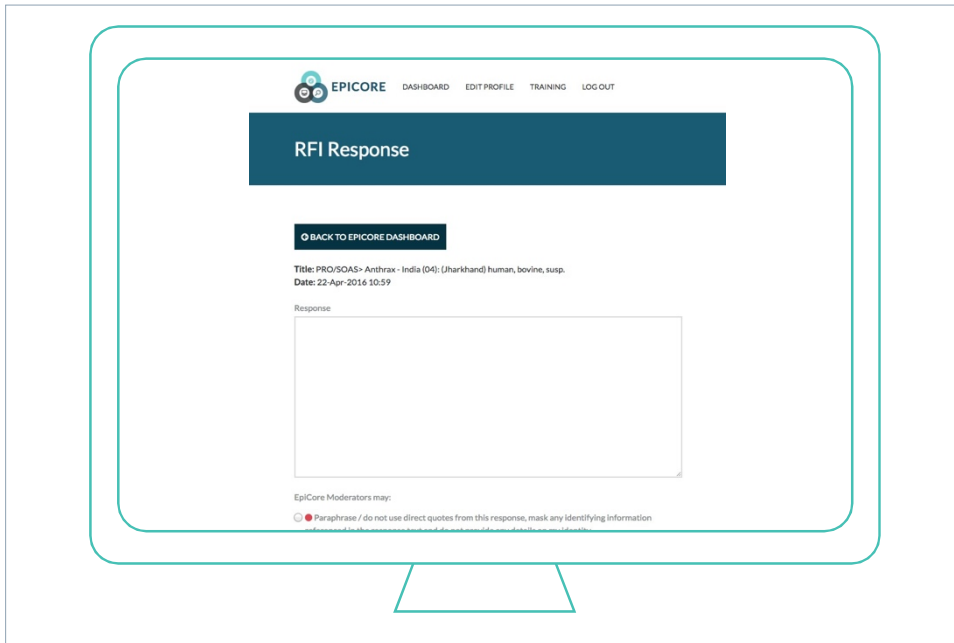
First, you will begin receiving RFIs directly to your email inbox. This is an example.

Click on "Respond".

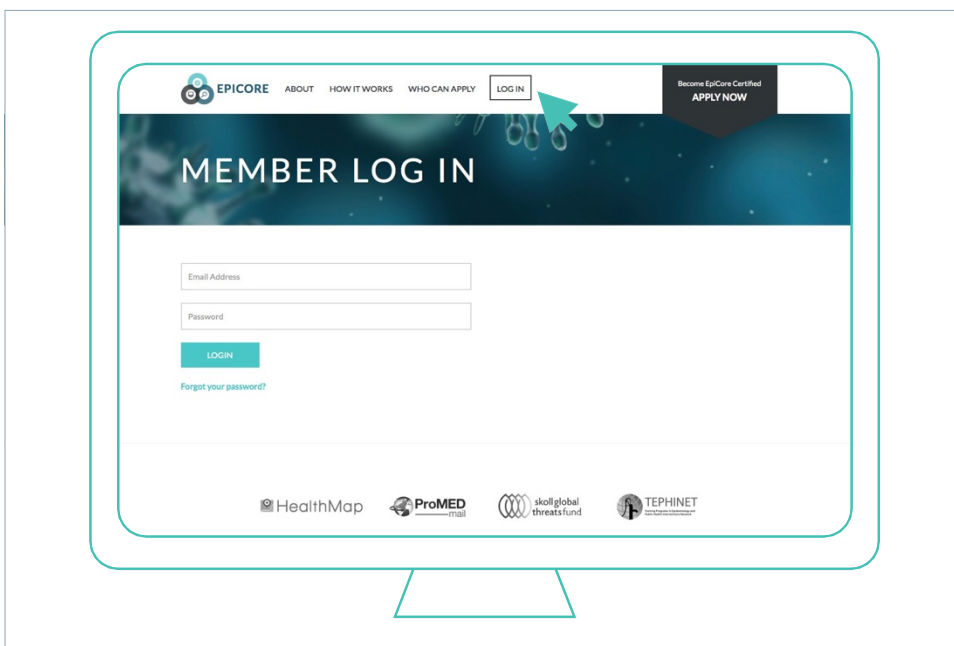
Do not reply to the email.



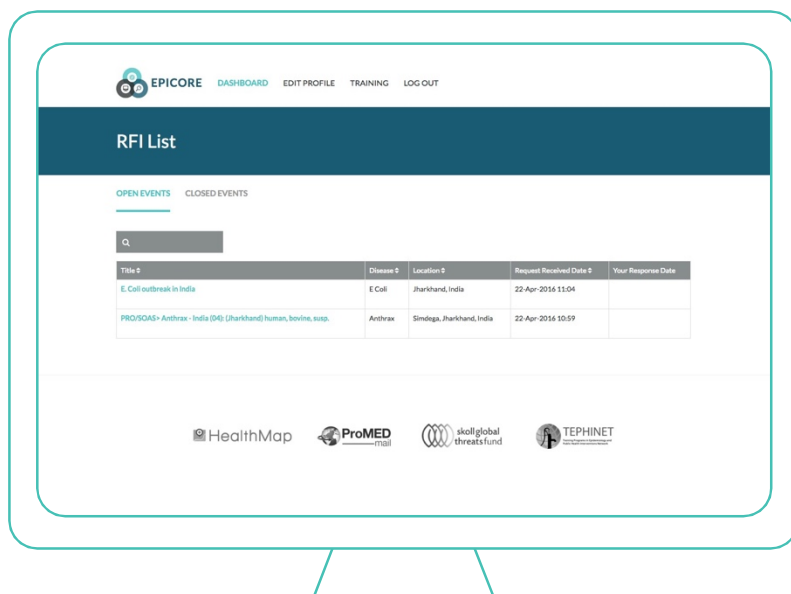
Then click on "Continue to EpiCore".



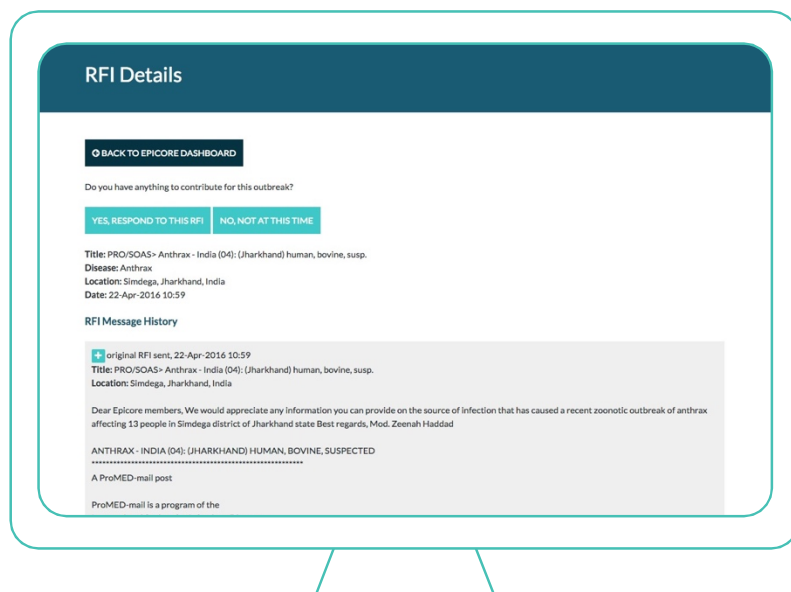
If you receive an RFI and you are logging in to EpiCore from the email, you will be directed to the response page for that RFI where you will see the text box ready for you to type in your response.



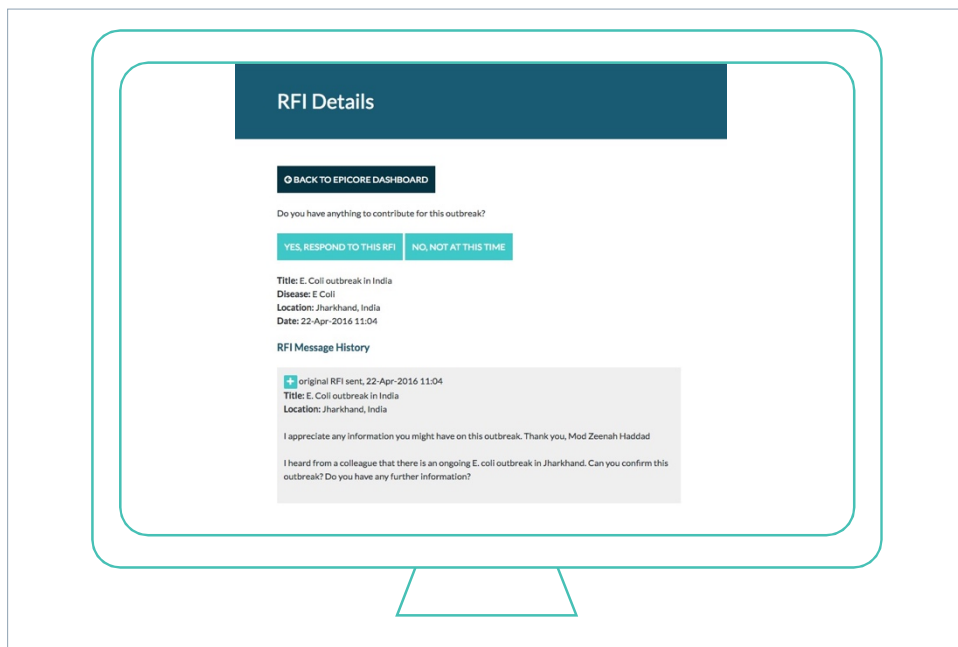
However, there is also an option of logging in directly to the EpiCore website using your credentials.



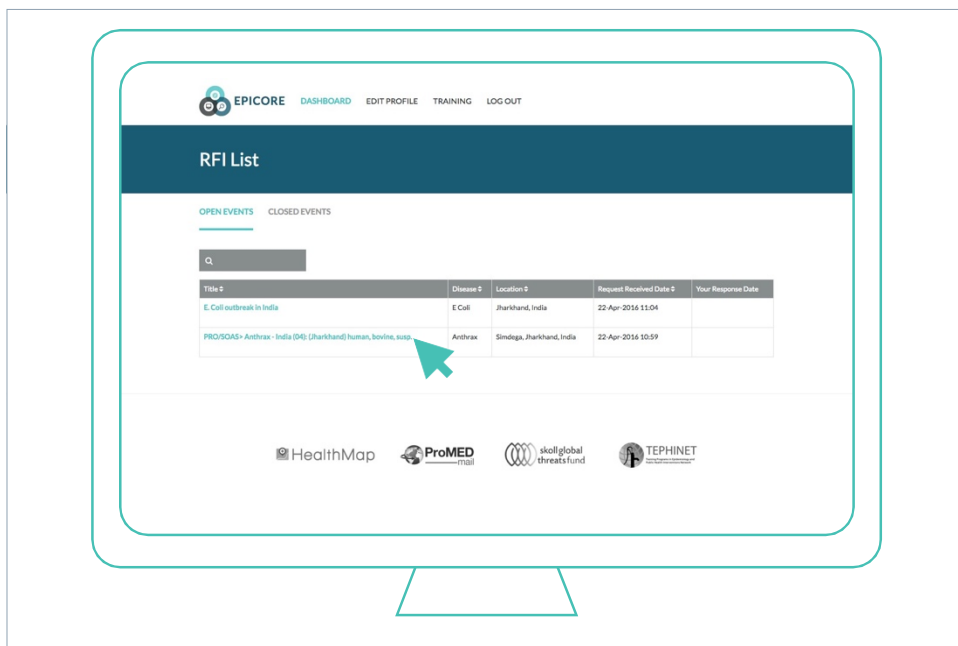
If you log in directly to the website, your homepage will look like this, and you will see all of the open RFIs you have received listed.



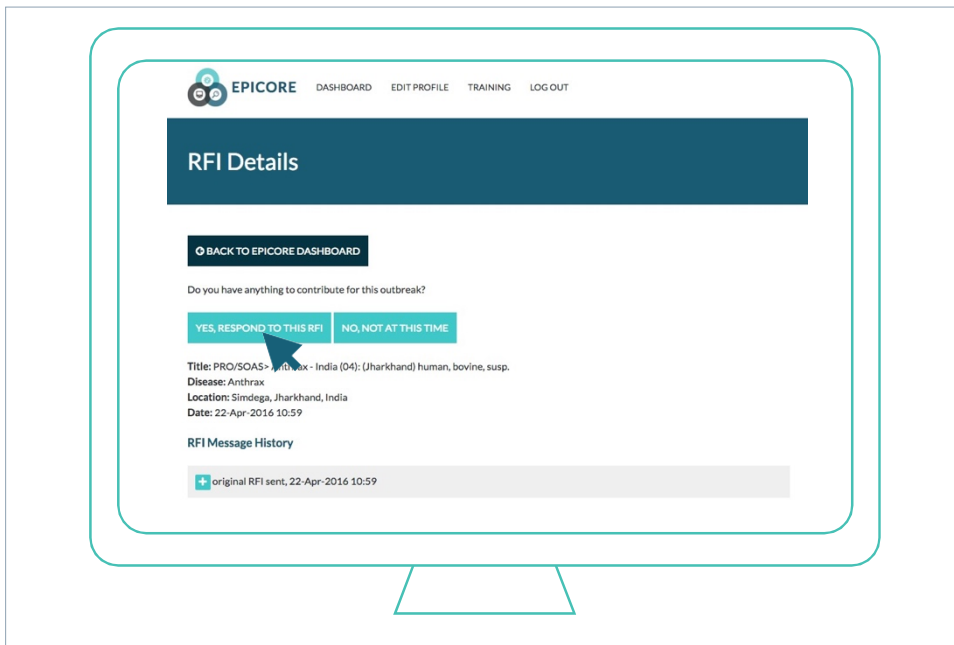
It is important to note that RFIs can vary in content.



You may receive a simple question from the requester.



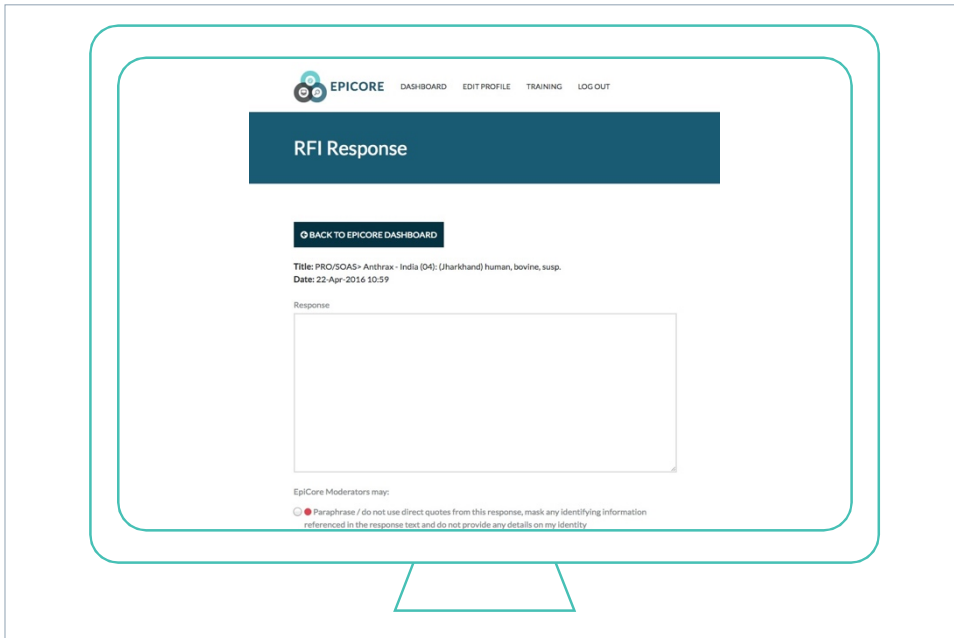
Other than clicking on the “respond” button in the RFI email you receive, the other way you can respond to an RFI is by clicking on the RFI you would like to respond to when on your EpiCore dashboard.



Once you click on an RFI, you will be asked if you have any information to contribute regarding the suspected outbreak.

If you do have information on an outbreak, click on "Yes, respond to this RFI". ➤

Or you can click "not at this time"



You will see a text box in which you can type your response. This is the same page you would have been directed to if you clicked on the email link to respond.

When you respond, **your identity is always masked**, which means requesters will not be able to know who you are unless you choose to reveal that information when you submit your response.

After filling out your response, you will then need to select your permission level for requesters to use your response in a public post. We have created options here to help you communicate to the requester the permission level you prefer.

[BACK TO EPICORE DASHBOARD](#)

Title: PRO/SOAS- Anthrax - India [D4]: (Jharkhand) human, bovine, susp.
Date: 22-Apr-2016 10:59

Response

The villagers said they consumed a dead cattle, suspected to have been killed by the disease, on Saturday night and developed blisters, stomach disorder and passed blood in stool. However, it was not clear whether the villagers had consumed cow or buffalo meat. Though cow slaughter is banned in Jharkhand, villagers often consume the meat of dead cattle. Samples of blood and body fluid from the affected people have been sent to the Rajendra Institutes of Medical Sciences (RIMS) for confirmation of anthrax. As per investigation report by the Jharkhand Integrated Disease Surveillance Programme (IDSP), the villagers developed symptoms of suspected anthrax within 48 hours of consuming the meat.

Anita Kaleka
Clinical Laboratory Scientist at the Sagar Hospital

EpiCore Moderators may:

- ☐ Paraphrase / do not use direct quotes from this response, mask any identifying information referenced in the response text and do not provide any details on my identity
- ☒ Quote this response but mask any identifying information referenced in the response text and do not provide any details on my identity

[SUBMIT](#)

You can choose to ask the requester to directly quote your response and attribute it to you when including it in the public post.

If you choose this option, ➤

You will be prompted to enter your name and title as you would like them to appear in a public post since they would not be revealed to the requester in any other way.

This option is marked with a green circle on the site. ●

[BACK TO EPICORE DASHBOARD](#)

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- ☒ Quote this response and attribute it to me

[SUBMIT](#)

If you want to give the requester permission to quote your response but would like them to mask any identifying information referenced in the response text or any details you might provide on your identity, you would choose this option. ➤

"Quote this response but mask any identifying information referenced in the response text and do not provide any details on my identity"

This option is marked with a yellow circle on the site. ●

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Anita Kaleka
Clinical Laboratory Scientist at the Sadar Hospital

EpiCore Moderators may:

☒ Quote this response but mask any identifying information referenced in the response text and do not provide any details on my identity

☐ Quote this response and attribute it to me

SUBMIT

Or, you can request that the requester paraphrase your response entirely to avoid using any words or phrases that can inadvertently help reveal your identity to the readers. ➤

“Paraphrase/do not use direct quotes from this response, mask any identifying information referenced in the response text and do not provide any details on my identity.”

This option is marked with a red circle on the site. ●

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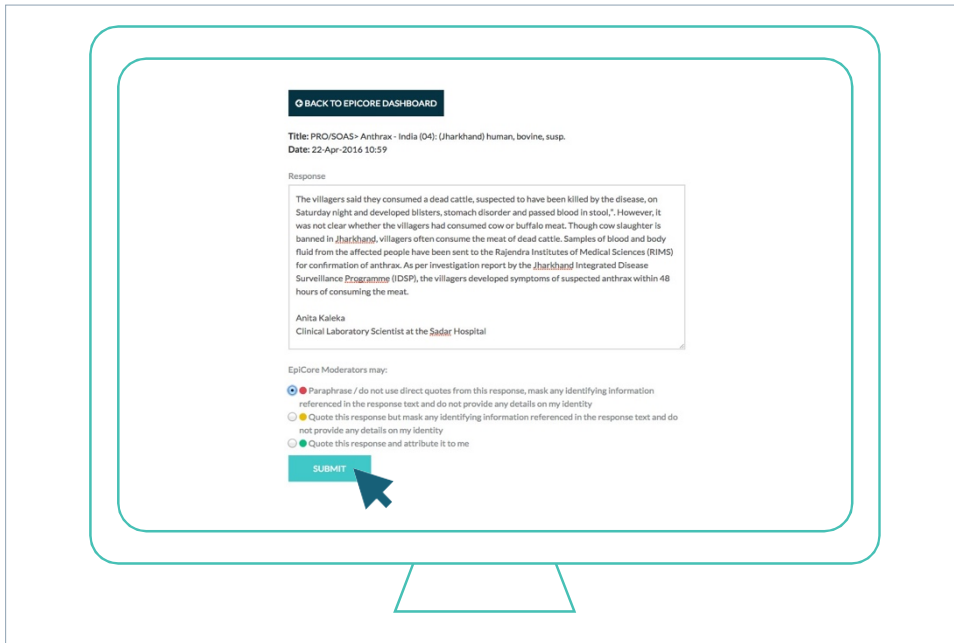
☒ Paraphrase / do not use direct quotes from this response, mask any identifying information referenced in the response text and do not provide any details on my identity

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☐ Quote this response and attribute it to me

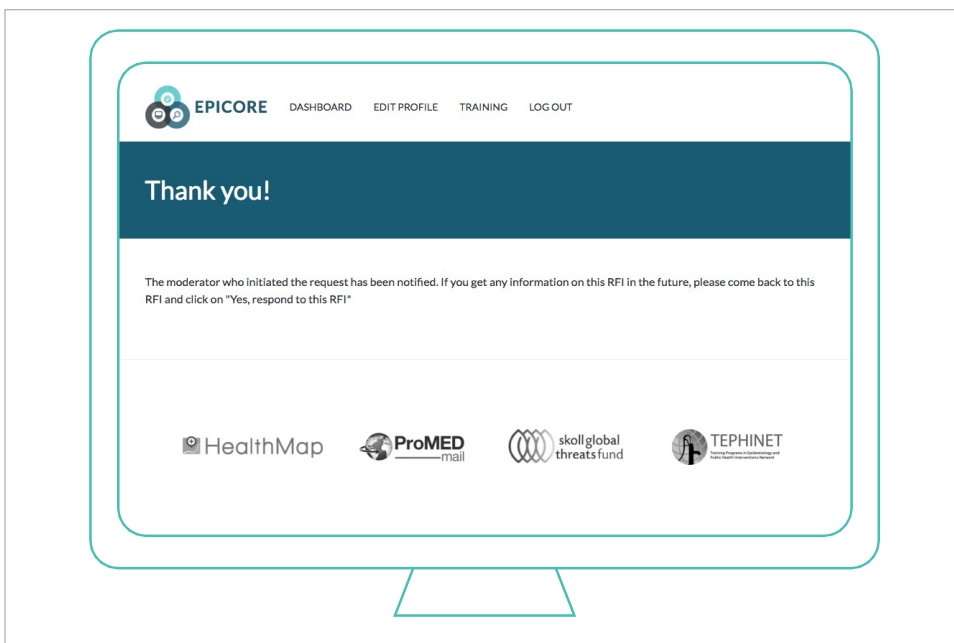
SUBMIT

It is important to note that even if you wish to remain anonymous, ideally, you would still share your name and title so that the requester knows that the information provided is credible before disseminating it just as any good journalist would do. You can ask the requester to keep your identity confidential, which they are trained to do. However, **it is certainly up to you to decide the level of information you are comfortable disclosing in each response.**

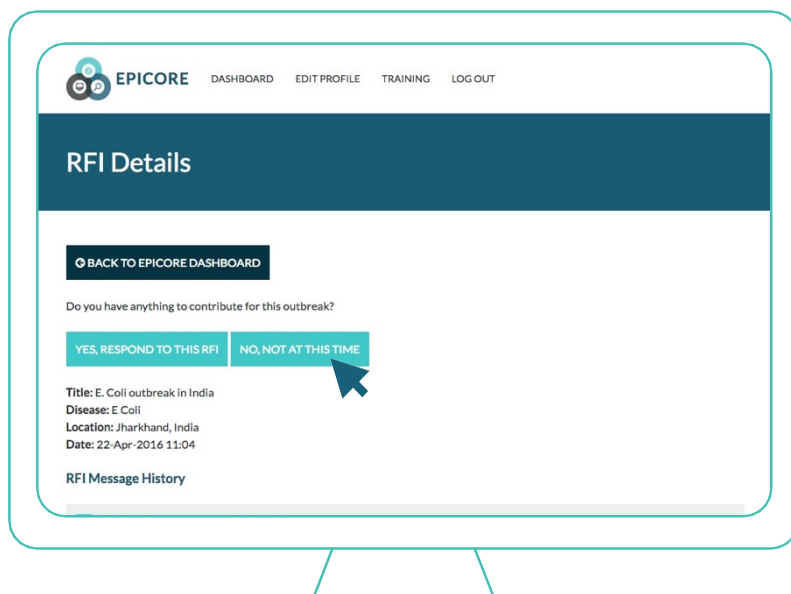


After all the fields have been completed and your preferred permission level settings are selected, click on "SUBMIT".

If privacy is a concern of yours, and while the EpiCore website is built to protect your anonymity, you also need to safeguard your own privacy by making sure that you are not being monitored while submitting a response, and to close all other pages on your browser, as some social media pages, if opened simultaneously with EpiCore, might jeopardize anonymity.



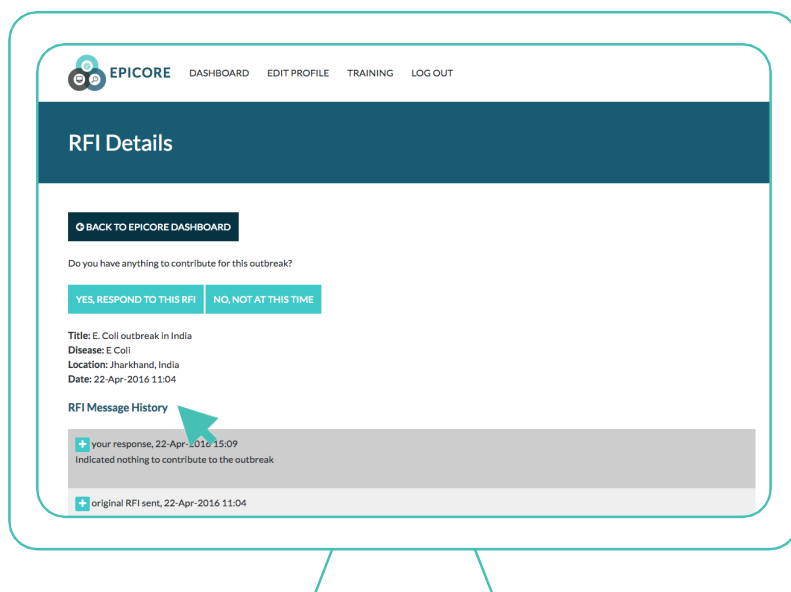
After clicking "submit", you will be directed to another page where a verification box appears stating that your response has been sent to the requester who initiated the RFI.



Always remember when responding to an RFI that **some information is better than no information**.

However, if you do not have any information at that time, simply click on "No, not at this time". ➤

Once you have clicked this button, a message appears on the requester's dashboard that a member indicated that they did not have any information to contribute at this time.

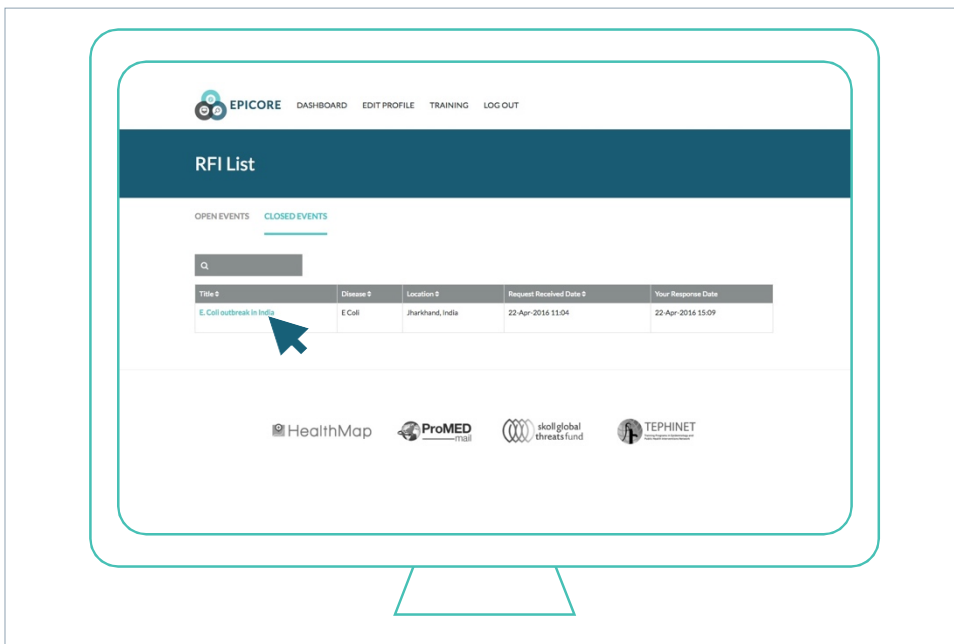


If you come upon new information to contribute to an RFI after you have clicked "No, not at this time", you can always go back and contribute to the RFI in the future. You will be able to find any messaging history for the RFI listed on its page. ➤

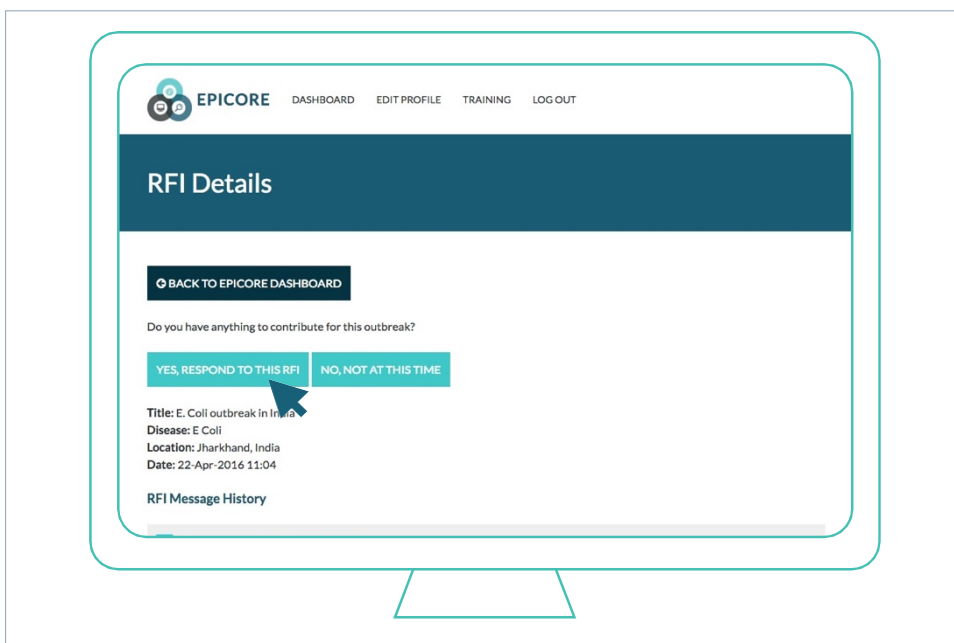
It is important to note that you will only receive an RFI if an outbreak is suspected in your country or region. This means that you might not receive an RFI for weeks, or you may receive several in the span of a few days.

When a requester sends an RFI to members within a certain geographic area, he or she will assess all the responses received, and if sufficient information were provided, the requester might decide to “close” the RFI.

This will move that RFI from the “Open Events” tab on your dashboard to the “Closed Events” tab.



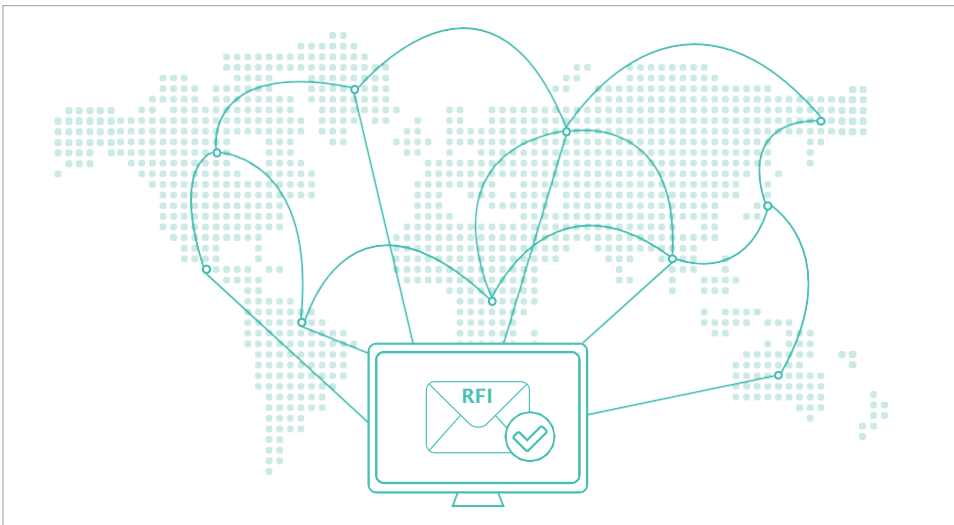
But note that you will still have the ability to respond to RFIs **even after they are closed**, and this is because we recognize that you might come upon information on an outbreak you think is important to communicate after the requester closes it.



CONCLUSION

Your verification of an RFI will help you and the rest of the world detect outbreaks faster by verifying potential outbreak signals.

By detecting outbreaks faster, health officials can generate early responses that can curb epidemics and save lives! Think about if we had known about the Ebola or MERS outbreaks a few weeks earlier and how much difference this would have made! This is how you and EpiCore are changing the landscape of outbreak detection and reporting.



We cannot wait to start working with you!

We are happy to answer any questions you may have. Please send any questions to: info@epicore.org.