



HANDBOOK

EpiCore Training

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH



Introduction

This manual will explain key concepts of EpiCore and provide you step-by-step instructions on how to use the EpiCore system as a Responder to Requests for Information (RFI) sent by several organisations.

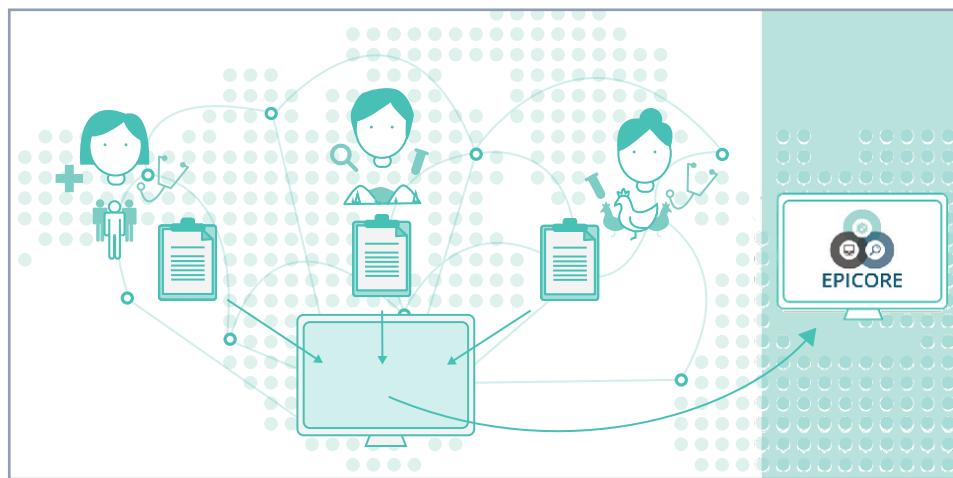
By the end of this manual, you should feel comfortable using EpiCore and applying your knowledge and expertise to this innovative global surveillance system.

Learning objectives for this course include understanding:

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

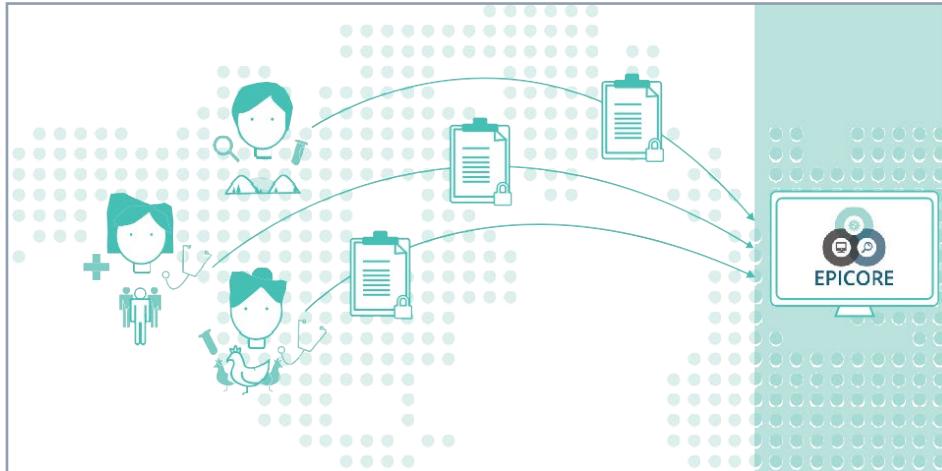
What is EpiCore?

EpiCore is a new system aiming to contribute to the verification of rumors about potential public health events and the collection of information about ongoing events through the support of an extended network of health experts reporting locally. EpiCore draws on the knowledge of a global community of human, animal and environmental health professionals and connect them with a secure online networking reporting system.



Using innovative surveillance techniques and linking local and international health experts, EpiCore enables faster global outbreak verification and reporting.

EpiCore is not meant to replace any existing official verification/surveillance mechanism. It should be considered a complementary tool supporting collection of info for assessment/response.

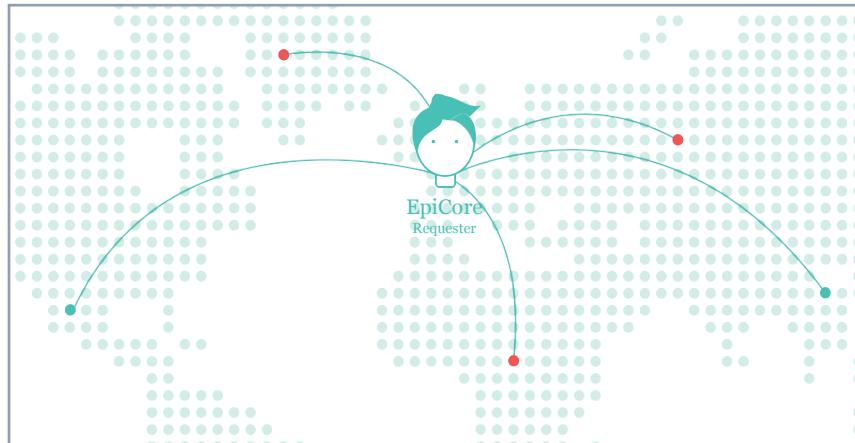


EPICORE COMMUNICATION

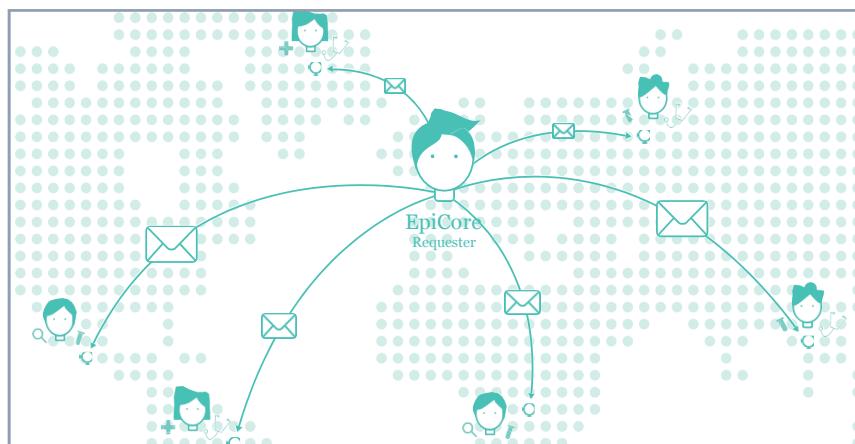
Communication on EpiCore is facilitated by what are called “Requests For Information”, or RFIs for short.



EpiCore requesters (Surveillance experts and analysts from international organisations as ProMED, HealthMap and more), look for leads regarding possible outbreaks around the world.



When a rumor about a public health event is found, EpiCore requesters will send an RFI to request verification from EpiCore members in that geographic region.



PROMED

The Program for Monitoring Emerging Diseases (ProMED) - is an Internet-based reporting system dedicated to rapid global dissemination of information on outbreaks of infectious diseases and acute exposures to toxins that affect human health, including those in animals and in plants grown for food or animal feed.

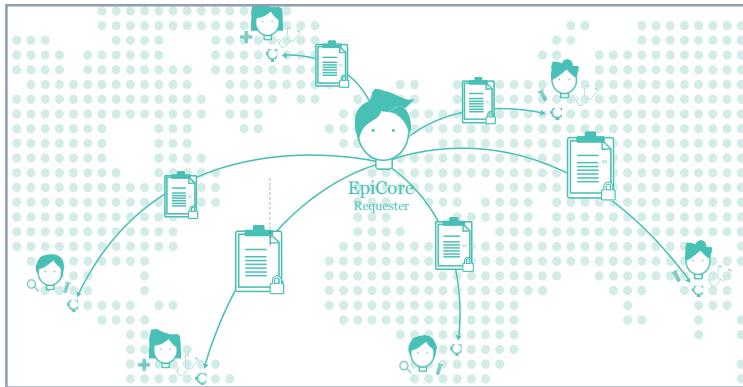
Learn more at:
www.promedmail.org

HEALTHMAP

HealthMap is an established global leader in utilizing online informal sources for disease outbreak monitoring and real-time surveillance of emerging public health threats. The freely available Web site 'healthmap.org' and mobile app 'Outbreaks Near Me' deliver real-time intelligence on a broad range of emerging infectious diseases.

Learn more at:
www.healthmap.org

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

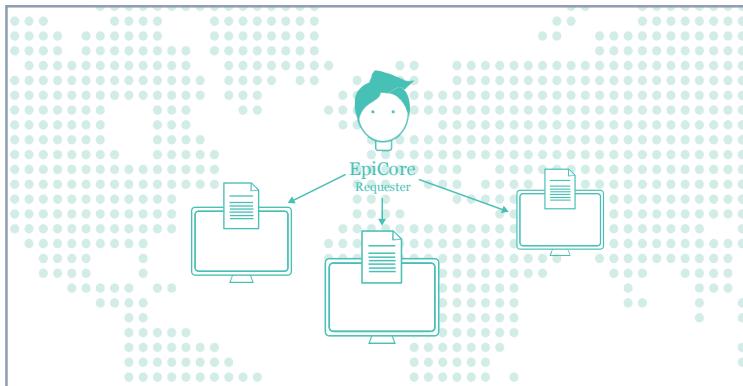


BE SURE TO CHECK OUT

The EpiCore public dashboard at:
https://epicore.org/#/events_public

The outcomes of EpiCore verification process are then used by our RFI requesters to disseminate valuable information through their own communication channels and; we want them to communicate always. In addition, short summaries with the main findings are posted on EpiCore public dashboard”

https://epicore.org/#/events_public.



MEMBER CREDENTIALS AND QUALIFICATIONS



There are certain minimum credentials EpiCore members need to have. These include a degree in human, animal and/or environmental health such as 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.

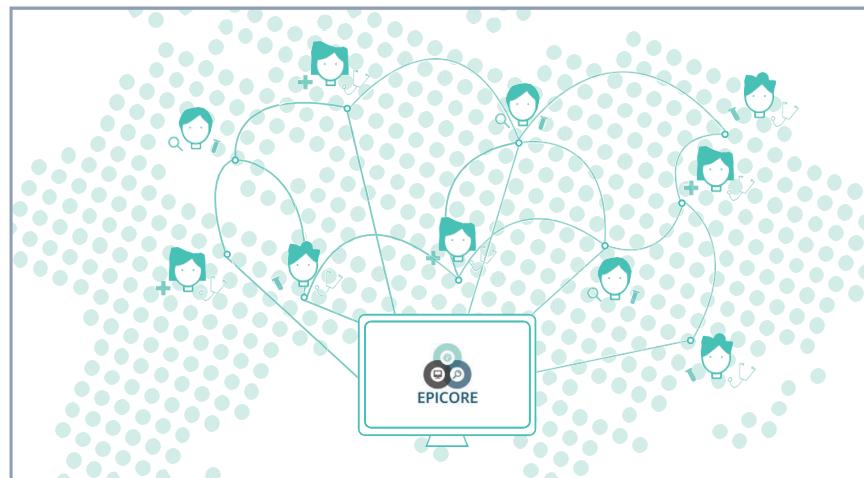
All EpiCore members must have at least 2 of the following qualifications:

- **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, MOH, DoH, 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 acute public health event 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 acute public health events 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.



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.

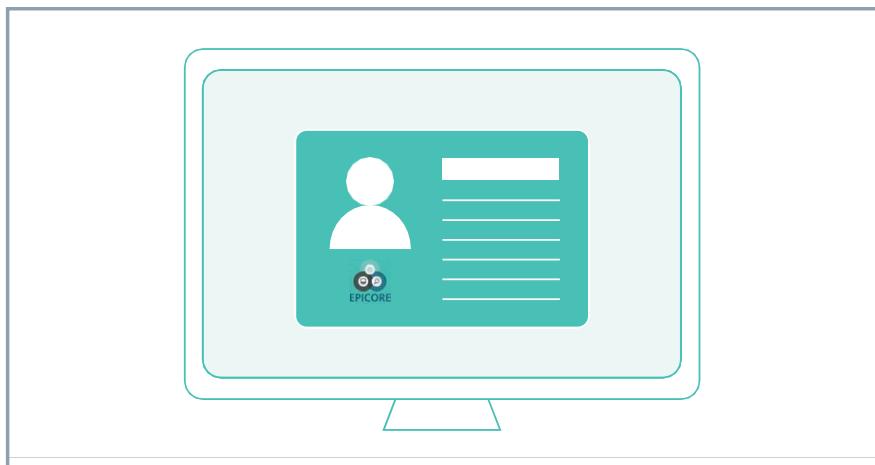
Our EpiCore members can help protect people in their communities, countries, regions and across the globe. Your participation in EpiCore is critical in helping to stop epidemics and save lives. You will help change the landscape of disease surveillance by becoming an EpiCore member! In return, what is 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

In addition you will also benefit individually as we value your participation and give you access to exclusive scientific resources, including possibility to attend public health training sessions and educational material on infectious disease prevention and control.

You will find all these contents in the **RESOURCES TAB** of your account; new opportunities and updates in terms of contents will be highlighted in **NEWSLETTERS** that you will receive quarterly.

EPICORE RESOURCES

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RFIs and 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 several organisations. 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 published reports on emerging and re-emerging diseases from all over the world.



CURRENTLY EPICORE REQUESTER ORGANISATION ARE:

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.

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:

www.promedmail.org/aboutus/whoiswho/

Did you find a report about your 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.

GEOSENTINEL

GeoSentinel is a worldwide communication and data collection network for the surveillance of travel-related morbidity that was initiated in 1995 by the International Society of Travel Medicine (ISTM) with the support from the US Centers for Disease Control (CDC) as a network of ISTM member travel/tropical medicine clinics. GeoSentinel is based on the concept that these clinics are ideally situated to effectively detect geographic and temporal trends in morbidity among travelers, immigrants and refugees.

LINKS TO EXPLORE

Check out the Health Map website:

<https://www.healthmap.org>

More information on GeoSentinel can be found at:

<http://www.istm.org/geosentinel>

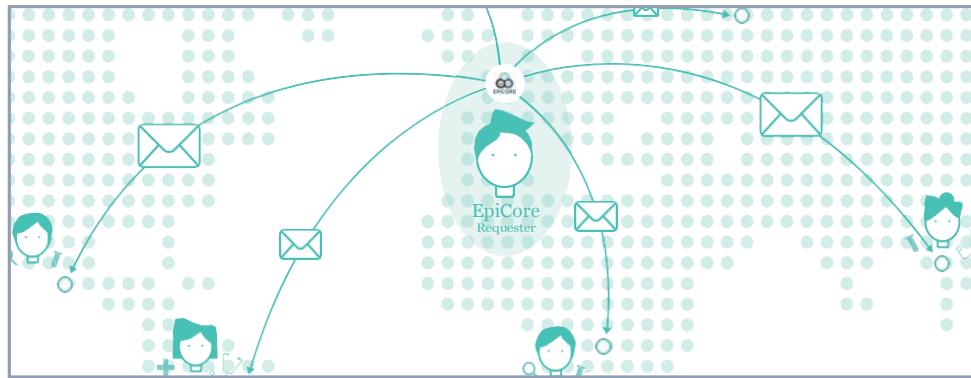
For more information on MSF SPAIN (MSF OCBA) follow this link:
<https://www.msf.es/>

MSF SPAIN (MSF OCBA)

MSF Spain, also known as MSF OCBA (Operational Centre Barcelona), is one of the five operational centres of Médecins Sans Frontières, an international independent medical humanitarian organisation that delivers emergency aid to people affected by armed conflict, epidemics, natural disasters and exclusion from healthcare. MSF Spain currently works in around 30 countries offering assistance to people based on needs and irrespective of race, religion, gender or political affiliation.

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.

INFORMATION YOU SHOULD PROVIDE IN AN RFI

Here are some examples of the types of information you should provide when responding to a RFI:

Information on **PERSON(S)**, such as:

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



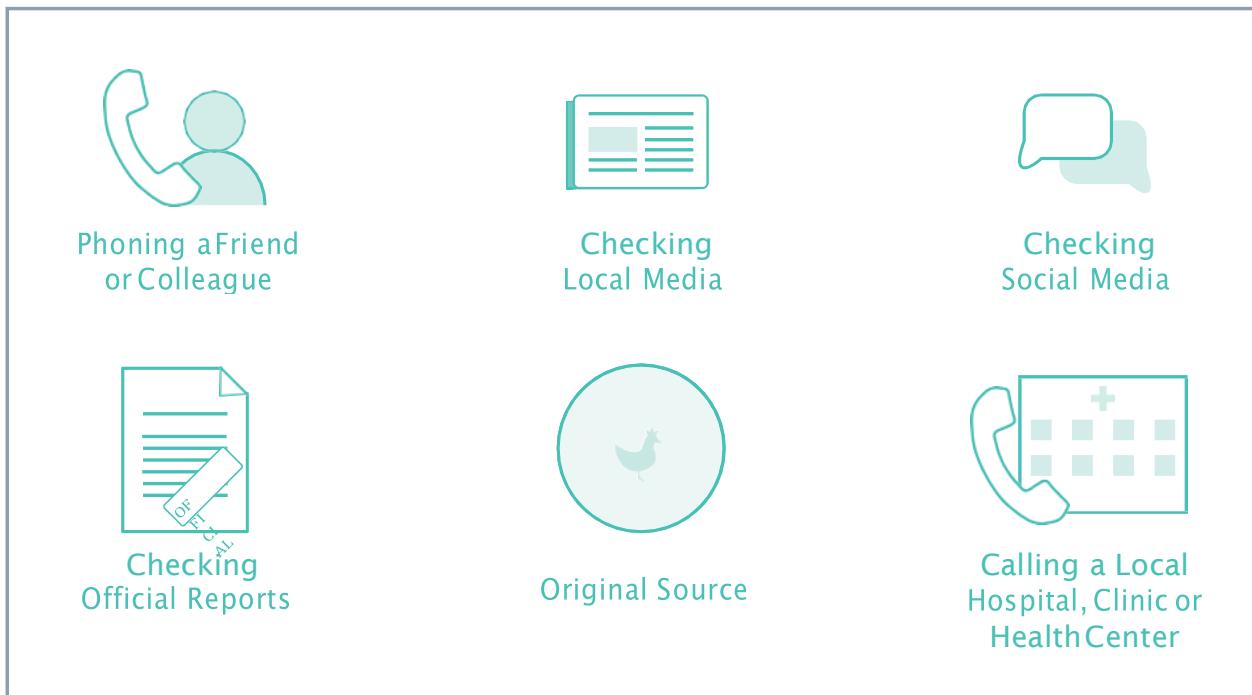
Information on **PLACE**, such as:

- the location of case(s)

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

- the date of occurrence(s), symptoms onset, reporting etc.

Remember! Some information is better than no information! However, please try to indicate the level of confidence in the source you are using.

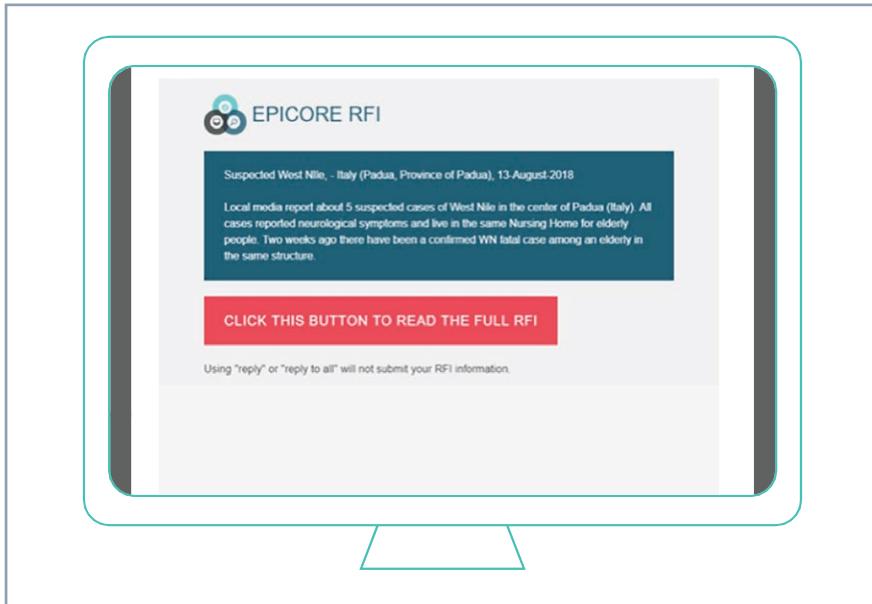


LINKS TO EXPLORE

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:

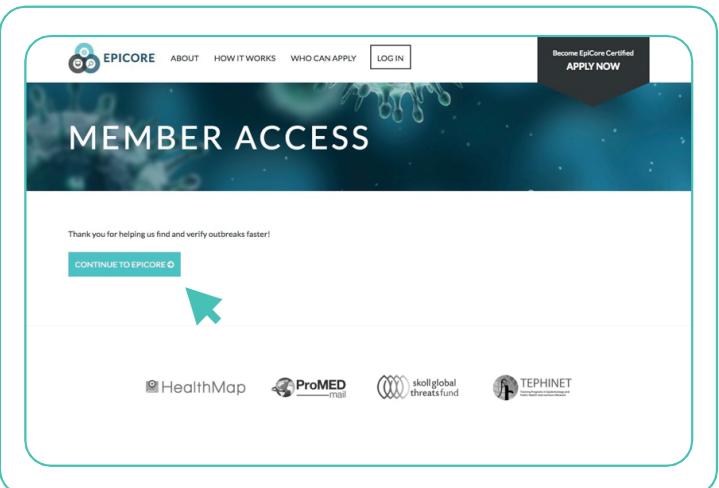
- Phoning a friend or a colleague
- Checking local media, like newspapers, radio, TV, etc.
- Checking social media in your language/country for trends on disease/ symptoms
- Checking official reports
- Going back to the original source

HOW TO USE THE EPICORE PLATFORM

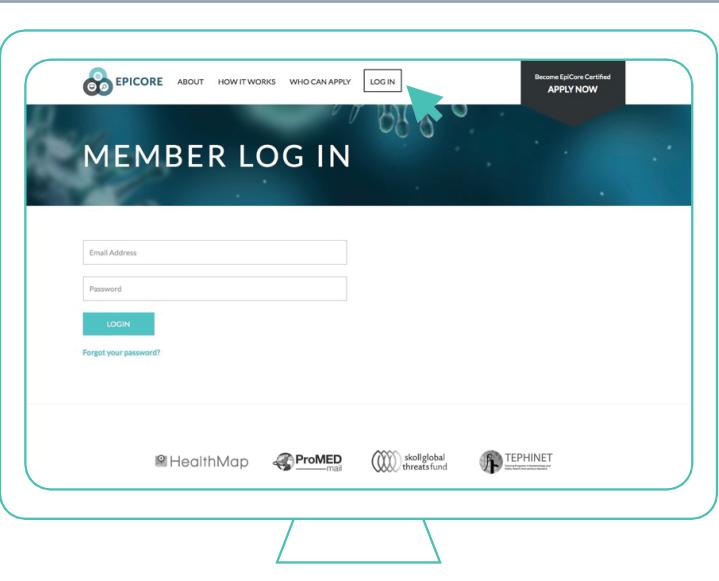


First, you will begin receiving RFIs directly to your email inbox. This is an example.

The email contains a short summary of the RFI that has been sent to you with basic information about the event. To open and read the full RFI click on the red box. Remember: do not reply to the email.



Then click on “Continue to EpiCore”. Consider that there is also an option of logging in directly to the EpiCore website using your credentials.



EPICORE DASHBOARD PUBLIC RFIS EDIT PROFILE TRAINING RESOURCES LOG OUT

RFI List

OPEN EVENTS CLOSED EVENTS

#	Title	Date	Location	Reporter	Reported Activity	Created	RFI Status
1	Suspected West Nile - Italy (Padua, Province of Padua), 13-August-2018	14-Aug-2018	Italy	EpiCore	No Answer	23-Aug-2018	Pending

The information included has been verified by EPICORE, a network with a world-wide distribution of public health professionals ensuring a large spectrum of verification activities in proximity to where events are reported. EPICORE members are not responsible for the accuracy of the information provided. EPICORE does not aim to replace any official reporting system and is meant to be a complementary surveillance tool supporting public health actors in their activities. For official reports please refer to the relevant national information. This information does not represent an official report and sources included should not be qualified as "officially-verified".

In this case you will see a list of all of the open RFIs you have received. To see the full RFI and be able to answer you have to click on the specific RFI.

Once you click on an RFI from your dashboard, or you have clicked on the red button from the email you have received, you will see the full RFI with all the details regarding location, health condition, affected population and source of information. The RFI will likely include the source of information, for example the url to the online media report.

Details on RFI # 1016

1 responder on RFI # 1016

Title Suspected West Nile - Italy (Padua, Province of Padua), 13-August-2018

Location Padua PD, Italia

Date 13-Aug-2018

Affected Population Suspected West Nile

Health Condition Local media report about 5 suspected cases of West Nile in the center of Padua (Italy). All cases reported neurological symptoms and died in the same Nursing home for elderly people. Two weeks ago there have been a confirmed WNV fatal case among an elderly in the same structure.

Other Relevant Public Health Details

Purpose

Source: Media Report

http://www.epicore.it/it/italia/cronaca/2018/08/14/news-1016-sospette-5-casi-di-west-nile-in-

A screenshot of a web-based RFI response form. At the top, there's a 'BACK TO RFI' button, the date 'Date: 13-Aug-2018', and a 'Response' section containing a large, empty text area. Below this is a question about verified sources with three options: 'Don't quote, don't attribute' (red), 'Can quote, don't attribute' (yellow), and 'Can quote, can attribute' (green). A list of source types follows, including 'Direct observation (Site visit or information on-site, e.g. direct involvement in incident)', 'Indirect report (Report from another person in incident)', 'Indirect report (News-based or official media)', 'Official report (Media-based or official documentation)', and 'Other (Any other information not included in the list)'. At the bottom, there's a 'Files (optional)' section with a note about acceptable file types (images, pdf, xls, docx, txt, and doc) and a 'Select File' button.

A screenshot of the RFI message history page. It features three buttons at the top: 'RESPOND NOW', 'ACTIVE SEARCH', and 'NOTHING TO CONTRIBUTE'. Below these buttons is the 'RFI Message History' section. Under 'Permissions', there are five options: 'No contribution' (radio button), 'Active Search' (radio button), 'Don't quote, don't attribute' (radio button), 'Can quote, don't attribute' (radio button), and 'Can quote, can attribute' (radio button).

You are now asked to contribute to the verification process and can choose between three options.

1. If you feel you don't have any information available about this event that could support the verification process simply click on "**NOTHING TO CONTRIBUTE**". Consider that is not a final decision and that, if later on you find some information about the event you can still re-open the RFI from your dashboard and contribute.

2. If you don't have information about the event but think you may find out some in the coming days, please select "**ACTIVE SEARCH**". With this option you are explaining that you will try to collect information through external sources and/or through your network and will come back later with an answer. It is very important for the Requester to understand that somebody is actively searching for information so please do not be afraid to choose this option: you can always come back and report that you don't have found anything relevant by clicking later on option "**NOTHING TO CONTRIBUTE**"

BACK TO EPICORE DASHBOARD

Title: PRO/SOAS+ Anthrax - India (04) (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 Sadar 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
- Quote this response and attribute it to me

Enter your name, title, organization etc.

SUBMIT

3. The third choice is to directly provide information (“RESPOND NOW**”). If you choose this option, a new text box will appear where you can type your response (see pic).**

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 three options here to help you communicate to the requester the permission level you prefer.

1. 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.

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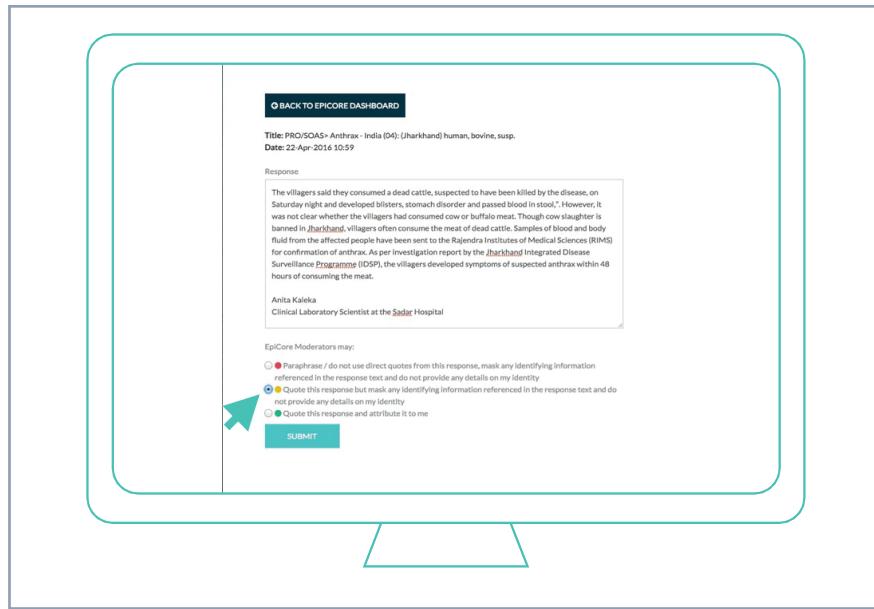
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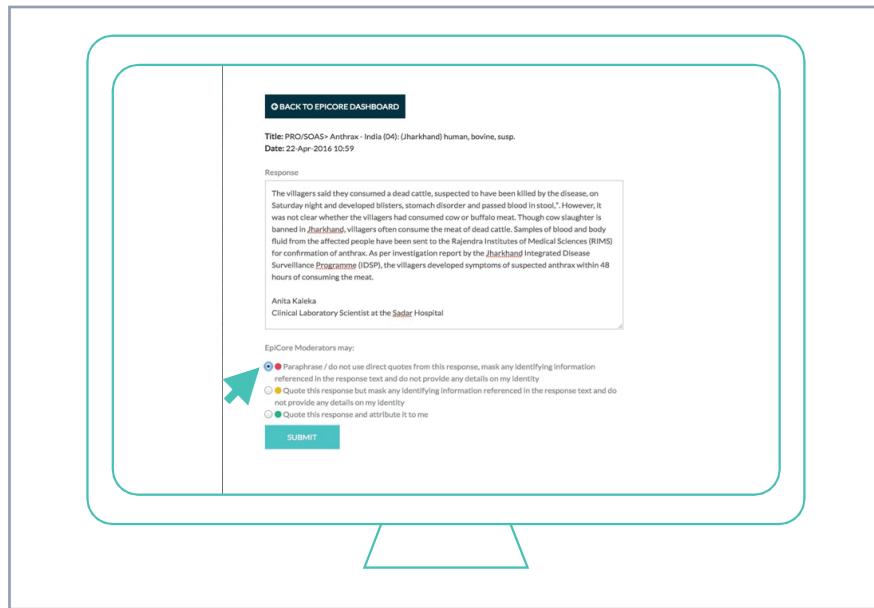
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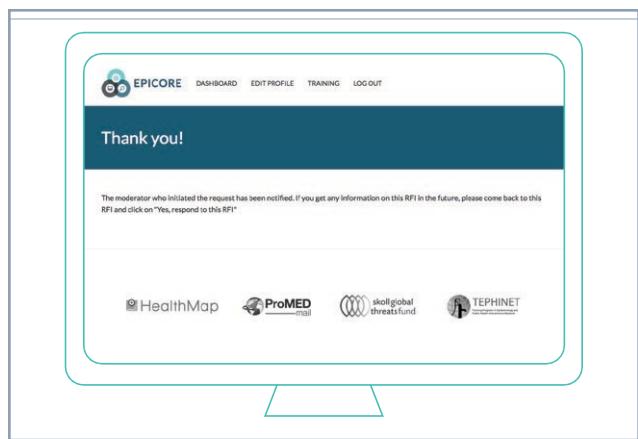
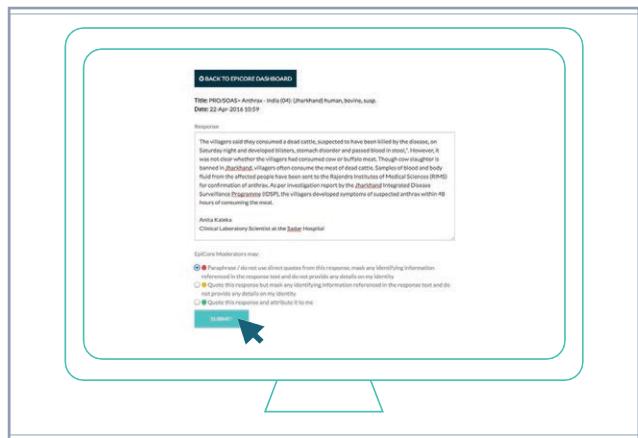
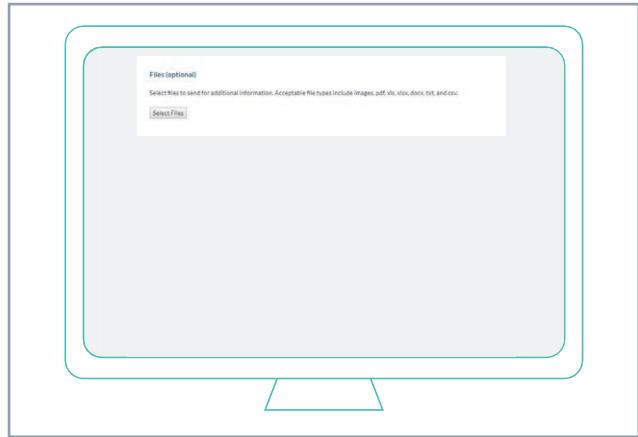
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SUBMIT

2. 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.

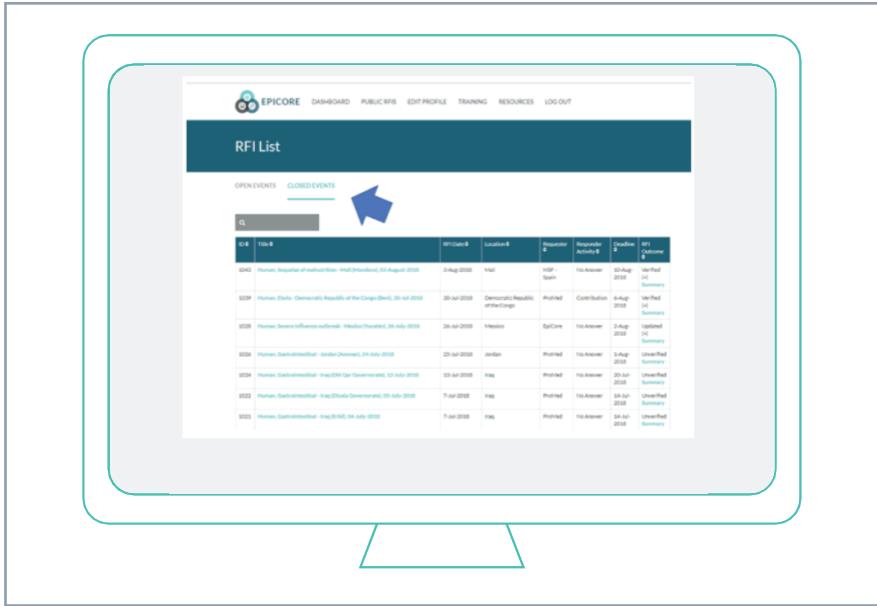
3. Finally, you can request that the requester paraphrase your response entirely to avoid using any words or phrases that can inadvertently help reveal your identity to the readers. “Paraphrase/do not use direct quotes from this response, mask any identifying information referenced in the response text and do not provide any details on my identity.” This option is marked with a red circle on the site.



Please consider that you have the option to attach a file to your contribution, for example an image or a document/report as a pfd, xls, docx, txt or csv file add this file select it using the button as showed in the picture below.

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.



It is important to note that you will only receive an RFI if an event is described in your country or region, or if for any other reason a requester has considered you may know something about it. This means that you might not receive an RFI for weeks, or you may receive several in the span of a few days.

CLOSED RFIS

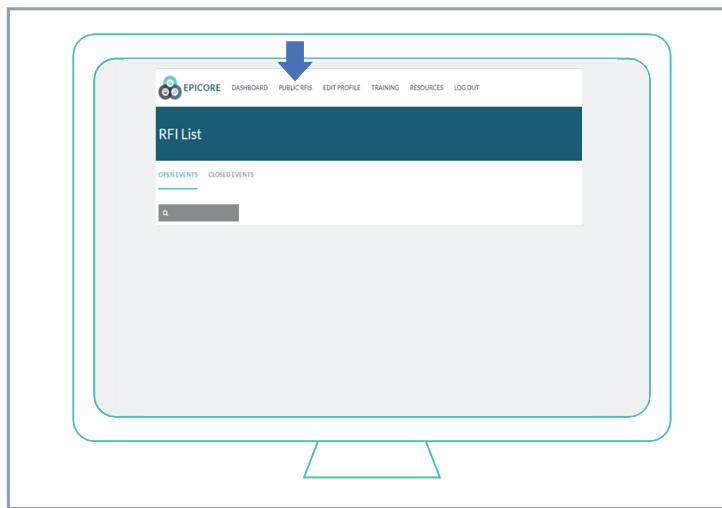
When a requester sends an RFI to members within a certain geographic area, he or she will assess all the responses received, and if sufficient information were provided, the requester might decide to “close” the RFI. This will move that RFI from the **“OPEN EVENTS”** tab on your dashboard to the **“CLOSED EVENTS”** tab.

NOTE:

You will still have the ability to add information to the 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.

EpiCore Public Dashboard

As mentioned before, all the details collected by Requesters through the platform will, in addition of being disseminate through information channels (e.g. ProMED posts), be used by them to finalise short summaries that will be included on EpiCore website and openly available on a Public RFI dashboard of verified events.



EPICORE PUBLIC DASHBOARD

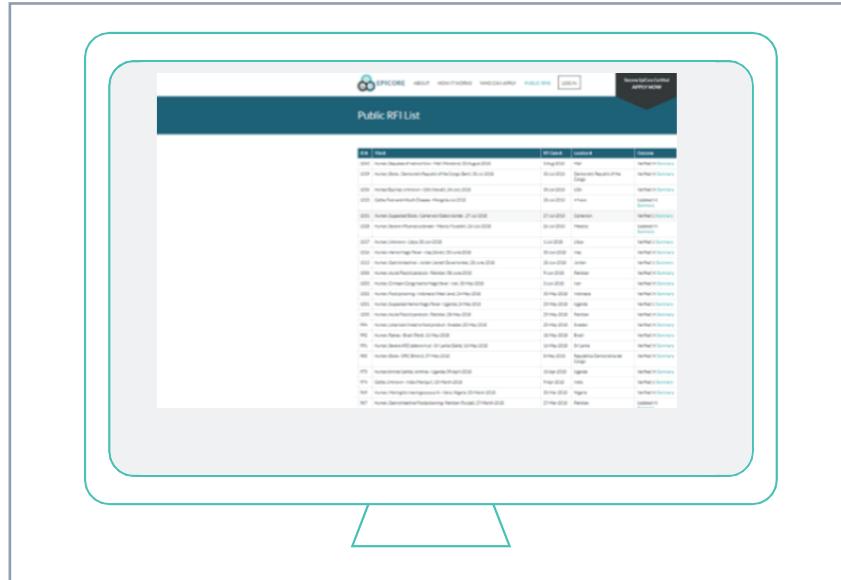
Follow the Public RFI tab on the website or go directly by following this link:

https://epicore.org/#/events_public

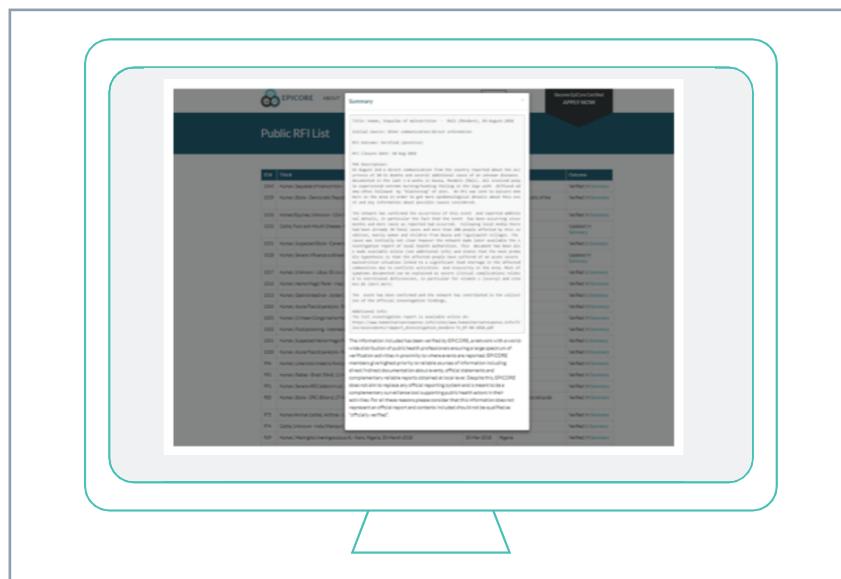
This section of the website can be reached by clicking on the **PUBLIC RFI** tab on your page (see below).

Or directly at the following url: https://epicore.org/#/events_public

The Public RFI dashboard includes a list of verified RFIs.



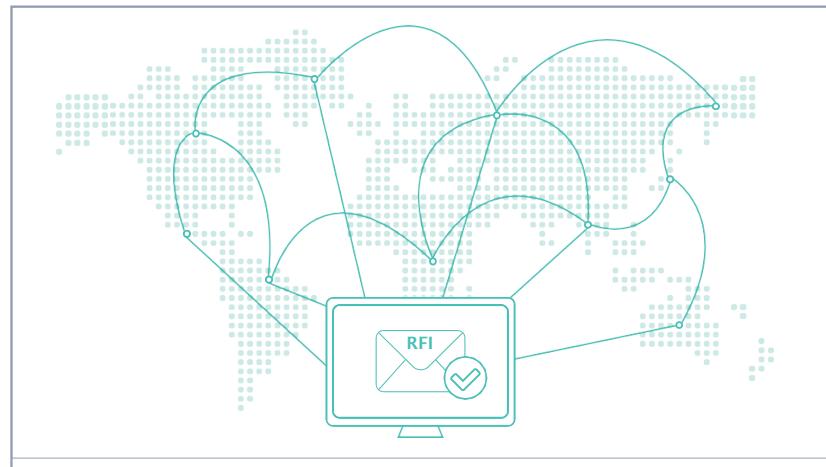
In order to read the information about a verified/updated included on this dashboard please click on the related summary: a pop-up will appear next to the selected RFI with the full summary (see pic below).



Conclusion

Your contribution to an RFI will help you and the rest of the world detect and verify public health events faster.

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 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 ARE HAPPY TO ANSWER
ANY QUESTIONS YOU HAVE**

Please send any questions to:
info@epicore.org

We cannot wait to start working with you!