Participants of the 2008 World Summit of Antivirals pose in front of the Empark Grand Hotel Kunming in China.

APHL MEMBER ATTENDS WORLD SUMMIT OF ANTIVIRALS IN CHINA

by *Sanjib Bhattacharyya*, PhD, chief molecular scientist and principal investigator, Select Agent Program for Bioterrorism Preparedness and Response, City of Milwaukee Health Department

Nearly 300 participants from more than 30 countries attended the BIT Life Science 1st World Summit of Antivirals (WSA-2008), held in Kunming, China, in July. Themed "Combating Severe Viral Infections," the conference had 19 sessions in four tracks, including public health and basic sciences, antiviral drug discovery, diagnostic tests and HIV/AIDS. Scientists, industrial professionals and key decision-makers discussed and analyzed new achievements, preparedness planning and the latest developments in antiviral research. The conference provided an excellent platform for communicating and collaborating with colleagues and antiviral research partners from around the world.

World-renowned speakers were featured at the meeting, including:

- Dr. Robert Gallo, director, Institute of Human Virology, University of Maryland, USA
- Dr. Harald zur Hausen, chairman, German Cancer Research Institute, Heidelberg, Germany
- Dr. Pierre Tiollais, professor, Nuclear Organization and Oncogenesis Unit, INSERM, Institut Pasteur, France

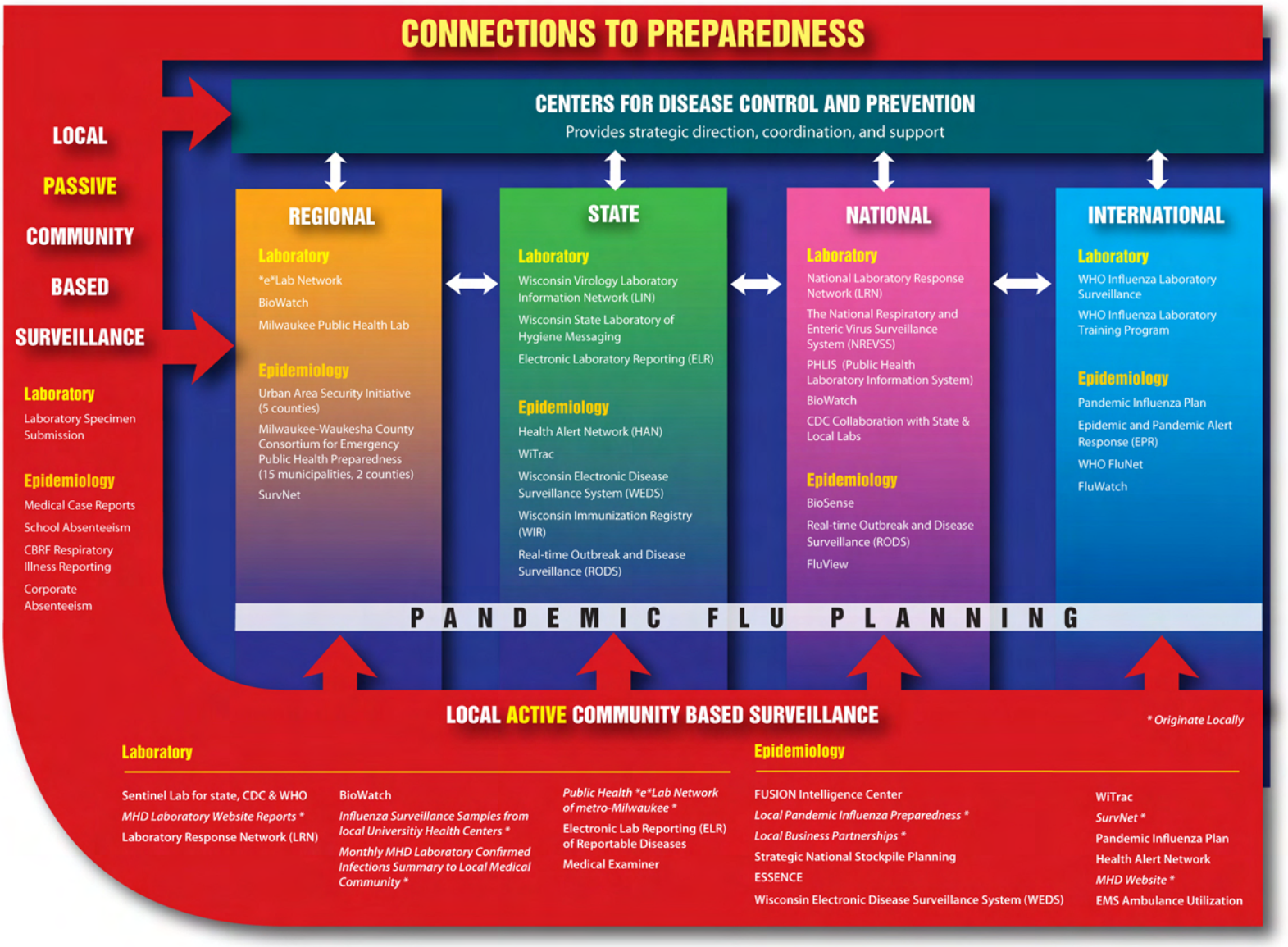
Lectures included:

- "New Emerging Viruses: Group-specific Antivirals Would be the Answer" by Dr. Claude Muller, professor, Institute of Immunology, Luxembourg
- "HIV Vaccine Preparedness Studies in the Non-organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (non-OECD) Countries" by Dr. Shayesta Dhalla, physician, Department of Health Care and Epidemiology, University of British Columbia, Canada
- "Collateral Effects of Antiviral Drugs--an Important Problem for the Medical Practice" by Dr. Mihai Nechifor, president, Romanian Society for the Study of Chemotherapeutics, Romania
- "Distribution Strategies of the Limited Amounts of Antiviral Medicine and Vaccines in a Context of Pandemic Influenza: Simulation Studies Using Global Epidemic Model (GEM)" by Dr. Georgiy Bobashev, senior research statistician, RTI International, USA

Sanjib Bhattacharyya, PhD, from the City of Milwaukee Health Department (Wisconsin) and a member of APHL's Emergency Preparedness and Response Committee, was an invited speaker and represented the association during the summit. Bhattacharyya chaired a session on planning and response to emerging viral diseases and gave a lecture, "Pandemic Preparedness: Community Model for Strengthening the National and Global Response Plan to Combat Viral Infections."

Bhattacharyya emphasized the critical community preparedness approach to developing practical

and predictive plans: the need and value of working collaboratively among the public health, emergency response and law enforcement fields. He presented CDC's phased preparedness planning as a model that strengthens healthcare services, infection control, risk analysis, information sharing and practice incident command systems; and ultimately improves rapid response. Bhattacharyya described the benefits of multi-sector collaborations that involved local business, agriculture, government and private agencies, academic institutions and basic researchers. Upon involvement, these stakeholders recognized the need for global pandemic preparedness and a strong public health infrastructure, all of which helps implement efficient response.

Bhattacharyya described Milwaukee's approach toward strengthening healthcare services, infection control and surveillance, risk assessment and clinical awareness of syndromes through rapid detection of viral agents. Availability, distribution and deployment of stockpiled vaccines and anti-viral drugs to those affected or at greater risk were identified as critical and formidable challenges. Bhattacharyya concluded the talk by recognizing that local and global preparedness for pandemic events hinges upon strengthening the public health and community infrastructure and its ties with national and international partners. The poster (co-authored by Steve Gradus, PhD, director, Milwaukee public health laboratory; Paul Biedrzycki, director, disease control and environmental health services; Mathew Wolters, home environmental health manager; and Angela Hagy, epidemiologist) generated interest in preparedness modeling and bio-statisticians experts in the US and abroad. ■

Poster presented during the WSA-2008 on Community Preparedness and response based on the Phased-Preparedness Model from CDC.