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UA Researchers to Study Airport Safety to Prepare For Next Infectious Disease Outbreak

The National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine has contracted the University of Arizona Mel and Enid Zuckerman College of Public Health to study Airport public health preparedness and response in the event of an infectious disease outbreak, such as the Zika virus.

Air travel has increased the potential for international transmission of infectious diseases. As increasing numbers of people travel by air, the potential risk of introduction and spread of infectious diseases by travelers is on the rise.

The University of Arizona Regulatory Science Program has been awarded a contract from the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine to study Airport Public Health Preparedness and Response.



Prompted by recent outbreaks of Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS), Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS), and Ebola, the contract will fund legal research on statutes and regulations to identify and describe the rights and obligations arising in response to the potential transmittal of disease through air travel.

The Regulatory Science Program is a partnership between the **Mel and Enid Zuckerman College of Public Health** and the James E. Rogers College of Law. Co-directed by [Leila Barraza, JD, MPH](#), assistant professor in the UA Mel and Enid Zuckerman College of Public Health and **Elizabeth Hall-Lipsy, JD, MPH**, assistant professor in the UA College of Pharmacy, the program combines legal experts and health science professionals to address regulatory impacts on science.

As principal investigator, Barraza will lead the research and development of a uniform playbook of best practices to be used by airport lawyers and managers when dealing with public health emergencies, including those involving communicable diseases. The playbook will outline the legal scope and responsibilities of airports in addressing these emergencies, as well as explore the roles of various stakeholders involved in health-related emergencies and air travel.

Barraza says the legal issues to be addressed will include isolation and quarantine, disease surveillance, contact tracing among others.

“With the ease of global travel, communicable diseases are just a plane ride

away from entering our country,” said Barraza. “This project will result in a playbook that will provide clarity and guidance for airport managers and attorneys on the legal rights, powers, and duties of airports when responding to communicable diseases spread through air travel.”

About the University of Arizona Mel and Enid Zuckerman College of Public Health

Established in 2000, the Mel and Enid Zuckerman College of Public Health at the University of Arizona Health Sciences is the first nationally accredited college of public health in the Southwest. Today the college remains the only accredited college of public health in the state of Arizona with campuses in Tucson and Phoenix. The college enrolls more than 1,100 students per year across degree programs at the bachelor, master and doctoral levels. Through research, education and community engagement, the UA Zuckerman College of Public Health continues to find solutions to public health problems in Arizona, the southwest and globally. For more information: publichealth.arizona.edu (Follow us: [Facebook](#) | [Twitter](#))

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