

In the Loop

April 22 -28, 2007

John Marshall Joins World Health Experts at Public Health Emergency Preparedness Workshop

Representatives from the United States, the European Union, the World Health Organization and the Czech Republic considered how health experts would assist in a major public health crisis when they gathered for the International Collaborative for Public Health Emergency Preparedness.

The health experts discussed not only the problems that could occur in a major public health crisis, but also considered how efforts to combat a major crisis could be coordinated.

The participants emphasized that lawyers, as well as professional public health experts, needed to be involved in the planning for public health emergencies because of the impact such planning would have on the legal rights and responsibilities of every citizen, regardless of their nationality.

The John Marshall Law School in Chicago, in cooperation with and the University of Illinois at Chicago School of Public Health, hosted this first annual workshop in Prague on March 9, 2007 at the Czech Bar Association.

The consensus from the conference was that national and even continental efforts alone would be ineffective in combating a world-wide epidemic. Participants agreed that the question was not whether, but when a "major" flu pandemic would again occur.

Czech health officials stated that hospitals and public care facilities could not possibly accommodate the more than three million persons in the Czech Republic alone who would likely be infected by such an epidemic.

Speakers at the workshop included Professor Michael Seng and Adjunct Professor Judith W. Munson of The John Marshall Law School in Chicago. Representatives of the United States Embassy in Prague, and the Institute for Post-Graduate Medical Education for the Czech Ministry of Health gave remarks.

Major addresses were delivered by Demetris Vryonides, head of the Legal Unit of the European Union's Commission on Health and Consumer Protection in Brussels; Roman Prymula, dean of the Czech University of Defense and Czech delegate to the Management Board of the European Center for Disease Control; and Alena Petrakova from the World Health Organization in Geneva,

Switzerland.

Czech participants included the Ministry of Health; the law faculty of Masaryk University in Brno; the Faculty of Public Health from Charles University in Prague; and the Faculty of Military Health Sciences of the University of Defense.

The conference was held when Seng was in the Czech Republic to teach a two-week expedited course in American National Security Law at Masaryk University in Brno. Adjunct Professor Judith Munson taught a separate course on International Public Health Preparedness Law at Masaryk University the week of March 13.