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Focus Group Questions for Public Health Practitioners

We would like to know about your overall decision-making process when a patient presents with symptoms of suspected foodborne illness (nausea, vomiting, diarrhea).

1. Generally, how much time are you allotted to see the patient?
2. What are some of the questions you would typically ask a patient with these types of symptoms?
Prompts:
 - a. Food exposures (e.g. food history, restaurants, etc.)
 - b. Other exposures (e.g. water, ill friends/family members, animals, travel, etc.)
 - c. Occupations that the patient may perform that risk spreading the pathogen (food handler, daycare worker, etc.)
3. What would influence your decision to order a laboratory test?
Prompts:
 - a. Health insurance
 - b. A suspected relationship to other illnesses suggesting a larger public health problem
 - c. Messaging from public health departments. If so, how?
4. What tests would you order? Why would you order these specific tests?
Prompts:
 - a. Anti-microbial susceptibility
 - b. Culture independent diagnostic tests (CIDTs)
 - c. Stool culture
5. Have testing practices changed in recent years?
Prompts:
 - a. If so, can you name some examples?
 - b. What do you believe led to these changes?

We would like to learn about resources you typically refer to assist you in your decisions to test/treat a patient with symptoms of foodborne illness (nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, etc.).

6. What resources do you typically reference to determine how to test/treat a patient with symptoms of foodborne illness (nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, etc.)?
Prompts:
 - a. IDSA Clinical Practice Guidelines Pocketcard, 2004 primer, HMO internal information source, etc.
 - b. Information gathered previously from medical school education, C.E., etc.
 - c. Online/mobile resources (e.g. UpToDate)
 - d. Consulting with another professional
 - e. Referring a patient to a specialist

7. Have you ever provided a patient with resources on proper food safety practices? If so, what type? Where did you find these resources?

Prompts:

- a. Types of resources (e.g. paper, electronic, smartphone app, etc.)
- b. How are these resources beneficial in providing optimal care?
 - i. To what extent do they help in saving time while treating patients?

Now we want to explore your communication with your local or state health departments.

8. In what situation(s) have you typically contacted your state or local health department to communicate about potential foodborne illness?

Prompt: What are some of the most common “triggers” that would cause you to contact them?

Prompt if needed: Do you generally who to contact and for what?

9. How comfortable are you with contacting your state or local health department to consult with their experts on potential foodborne illness topics, and/or report on concerns?

10. Specifically when there is an ongoing foodborne illness outbreak, how comfortable have you been with communications with state or local health department contacts?

Prompts:

- a. What worked particularly well regarding your communication with them, if any (whether related to timeliness, frequency, quality, or other factors)?
- b. What were some of the stumbling blocks, if any (whether related to timeliness, frequency, quality, or other factors)?