Nothing Spreads Like Fear: *Contagion*
A Movie Case Study

- **Vanguard began operations May 1, 1975:**
  - “A new type of mutual fund company”
  - 11 Mutual funds and $1.8 billion in assets
  - 350,000 shareholder accounts
  - 50 employees based in Malvern, PA

- **Vanguard today:**
  - “Provider of comprehensive investment management services”
  - Over 170 domestic funds and more than 70 funds in foreign markets
  - Nearly $3 trillion in assets
  - 9 million shareholders
  - More than 13,000 employees at 3 U.S. locations as well as offices in Europe, Asia and Australia
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Objectives:

– Explore the behavioral, ethical and procedural aspects of a widespread emergency and the implications on your company.
– Increase our understanding of a pandemic’s potential impacts on society.

Key Areas of Discussion:

– Pandemic facts vs. fiction, how accurate was the movie?
– Understanding how “fear leads to panic” and the implications for your company.
– Ethical issues and the challenges created by responders.
– How can the movie help us improve ourselves?
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Background About *Contagion*

– The movie’s fictional pandemic virus, MEV-1, is based on a real Nipah (NEE pah) virus, which suddenly and surprisingly jumped from pigs to humans in Malaysia in 1999.

– SARS and the fictional MEV-1 viruses first emerged in a remote location in China. Both;
  • Were carried to Hong Kong by infected persons
  • Spread globally from Hong Kong via air travelers

– A fomite is any inanimate object that is capable of carrying an infectious organism such as germs or parasites.
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**Discussion #1 – Day 1**  
Chapter 1, 0:00.00 – Chapter 4, 0:11.30, Day 1-3, Picking Clark up from school, Hospital scene  
Total time = 0:11.30

Questions:
1. What are some of the ways you saw the virus spreading?
2. Is it realistic that the virus could spread around the world in just three days?

**Discussion #2 – Agency Involvement/Communication Plans**  
Chapter 5, 0:14.21 – 0:15.40, The CDC’s initial communication plan  
Chapter 7, 0:17.45 – 0:20.15, CDC visits the Minnesota Dept of Health  
Chapter 9, 0:22.24 – Chapter 10, 0:26.55, Homeland Security visits the CDC  
Total time = 0:08.20

Questions:
1. What government agencies did you see getting involved at this point?
2. What was the CDC’s initial communication plan to the public?
3. Why was the Dept of Health concerned about releasing information to the public? Do you feel this was justified?
4. How did the communication plan to the public change as more time passed?
5. What challenges with communication did you see in those clips?
Discussion #3 – Effects on Society

Chapter 20, 0:52.01 – 0:54.02, Dr Meers in Isolation
Chapter 22, 0:57.46 – 1:00.45, Rumors, Looting, Fires, Grocery Store
Chapter 24, 1:03.19 – 1:07.42, Dr Cheevers vs Alan in CDC Interview
Chapter 26, 1:10.21 – 1:14.50, Govt Meals, Robbery/Guns
Total time = 0:13.53

Questions:

1. Were there any procedural decisions made based on the effects of the virus? Explain?
2. What type of impacts did the pandemic have on society?
3. What behavioral and/or ethical decisions were being made in the face of fear and panic?
4. What factors led to widespread panic?
5. How do you handle uncertainty?
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Discussion #4 – How It All Started
Chapter 34, 1:40.02 – end (1:41.32), How the virus started
Total time = 0:01.30

Questions:
1. How realistically was the movie portrayed?
2. What roles would both the private and public sectors play in an event like this?
3. How can the movie help us better prepare for ourselves and our companies?

THANK YOU!

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