Social Determinants, Culture and Contact Tracing

When developing approaches to contact tracing, consider the following.

**What?**
- **Social determinants**:
  - Education, isolation, transportation, access to care, housing, income and job, food security, mental health, environment and safety.
- **Cultural determinants**:
  - Shared meanings, values, beliefs and practices, language, ethnicity, history, religion, cultural construction of illness and disease.
- **Risk communication**:
  - Risk communication is used to transmit health messaging on many different topics, including the importance of childhood immunizations, risks associated with sexual behaviour and risks associated with infectious diseases.
- **Community engagement**:
  - Community engagement is the act of working collaboratively with communities to identify risks and find acceptable strategies to reduce these risks.

**How?**
- **Social determinants**:
  - Acknowledge social and cultural variations between contact tracers and contacts
  - Develop creative solutions for quarantine and isolation that respect culture and protect individuals and others in the community
  - Consider the values and important relationships within populations
  - Be alert to overt racism in testing and treatment
  - Recognise the importance of cultural understanding of disease, illness, prevention and containment
- **Cultural determinants**:
  - Consider the social, religious, cultural, political and economic factors associated with the situation
  - Risk communication should be a two-way dialogue, developed with communities
  - Work with community representatives to develop risk communication messaging to ensure messaging is culturally appropriate and accessible to the community
  - Engage communities at the earlier stage of response to inform contact tracing design and implementation
  - Inform, consult, involve, collaborate and empower the community
  - Five principles of community engagement: affirming dignity, pursuing justice, acting with humility, building connections and developing understanding
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- **Barriers and enablers**:
  - **Barriers**:
    - Education differences, gender differences, cultural differences, language differences, living/housing arrangements, daily activities and routines, past (adverse) experience with government and/or health organisations, rumours about the disease, Social stigma associated with being tested positive, unwilling to be isolated from families.
  - **Enablers**:
    - Gain a quick sketch/map/pulse of a person’s social and cultural circumstances/context
    - Apply local Explanatory Models of illness
    - Cultural humility/cultural competency/cultural sensitivity
    - Best practice risk communication strategies – involve local participation, accessible and situation-specific language and visuals, non-threatening, accounts for local concerns

Addressing these elements will lead to effective and culturally safe contact tracing activities.