

STANDARD DEVIATIONS: Location, Location, Location

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The secret to being safe in the laboratory can be summed up in three words, **location, location, location**. Allow me to explain.

First, there's your location on the atlas. Proximity to a pathogen is the easiest way to exposure. So, the farther we keep ourselves from risk of exposure the safer we are from that risk. Your chances of seeing Ebola here in Utah is nil, but in the Congo the rate of exposure in healthcare workers is near 9% of the cases. Too obvious? The incidence of *brucella* in Texas and Florida is higher than other states but many samples are sent out to labs far away, like ARUP or public health labs, where lab folk now face a risk that is brought to their location. Even though we feel removed from the risk, it may find us, anyway.

Secondly, our location on a time line is important. Here, it's when not where. If you're working on influenza before vaccination your risk is higher than after the vaccine has worked its magic on the immune system. Likewise, the emergence of a new, novel pathogen will pose the highest risk at its onset, before we have a chance to understand what we are seeing. The 1918 Spanish Flu, and every pandemic since, illustrates this temporal risk factor.

And lastly, the location of our mindset in the culture of biosafety is critical to avoiding risk in our work. If you are in the right place in your thinking about exposure and prevention, then your risk is diminished. If you're in the wrong place in how you think and act, then you've put yourself in a place where risk resides.

Location, location, location. Keep these three words in mind when thinking about your safety in the lab and you'll be in a better place, all the time.

Short and sweet! Have a great week and be safe,

Bryan