Nominee: Eric Bakota

Statement of Interest:

Eric Bakota has more than six years of experience in disease surveillance in public health as an epidemiologist, public health analyst, and scientific writer. In 2012, in his initial public health role of Sanitarian at Tazewell County Public Health, he inspected restaurants, wells, and septic systems to ensure they were up to health code. Shortly afterwards, he was promoted to being the county's sole epidemiologist. As the epidemiologist, he set up Tazewell County's first disease-alert system based on an algorithm that compared disease trends against historical averages. In 2015, he joined the Houston Health Department as an Informatician. There he helped enhance their influenza surveillance system to include data from Athenahealth and Flu Near You. He also oversaw the compilation of the 3rd Edition of the Epidemiology in Review, a compendium that analyzes 10-year trends of over 60 diseases reported to the health department. Bakota currently works as a public health analyst with Harris County Public Health where he is analyzing the impact of substance abuse, especially opioids, on the community; publishing scientific articles on disease surveillance; and working to increase scientific publications for the health department. During his short time with Harris County, he has also been awarded two grant proposals: One for improved surveillance of influenza-like illness and one to educate health professionals on the dangers of healthcare acquired infections.

Bakota joined ISDS in 2015 when he attended his first ISDS conference in Denver, Colorado. It was at that conference that he became connected to the R Group for Biosurveillance after attending the "Advanced R" pre-conference workshop. Shortly thereafter, he was asked to serve as Chair of the group, which he did for two years before just recently stepping down. He continues to be engaged with the ISDS community and offers his technical expertise when needed. He has also served as the ISDS Conference Workshop Chair for the 2017 and 2019 annual conferences. In this role he identifies, recruits, and coordinates the different workshops offered each day during the conference. Bakota holds a master's degree in biology and a bachelor's degree in English from the University of Houston. As a Board member, Bakota would continue to promote ISDS-sponsored data analysis training and capacity building activities.