

EBOLA OUTBREAK IN DRC IS OVER

As of July 24, 2018, the Health Minister of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) declared the Ebola outbreak over in his country, after the completion of two incubation periods since the last treated patient, without any more cases confirmed. Both the WHO and CDC concurred with his entire message. A 90-day enhanced surveillance period will be in place in case there are latent infections or missed exposures. **Ultimately, there were 54 Ebola cases (38 lab confirmed and 19 probable) with 33 deaths. Assuming that all the probable cases were Ebola, the case fatality rate was 61%.**

The Health Minister and both organizations expressed appreciation for a swift close to a potential multiple-country disease outbreak, which began on May 8 and lasted 11 weeks. He stated that the ability to control it was based on several factors including:

1. A rapid response team approach, with a team in place at the first site within 4 hours, and more teams quickly gathering and reporting to the areas of concern.
2. Partnerships with public health agencies, other organizations, businesses and countries, and 3/4 of the workforce coming from the Region. The many partners provided expertise, trained workers, monies for equipment and supplies, etc.
3. Three (3) mobile labs were set up for on-site testing which allowed for more efficient testing results and quicker management for patients.
4. Merck provided an experimental, but previously human-tested vaccine, which appears to have been very effective in stopping transmission of the disease among contacts as well as health care and other personnel that were involved in the care of those that were sick or exposed. There will be analysis of the data developed during the vaccination program and its effects, both positive and negative (if any) as well as level of protection and ongoing immunity.

This outbreak was of particular concern since it was in two remote villages and also spread to an urban area (Mbandaka), which was in proximity via the river, to the capital city of Kinshasa and other adjacent countries. The success found with the use of this model to manage this outbreak (the DRC's ninth) lends itself to replication for any subsequent outbreaks, with ongoing adaptations, as indicated. Ebola experts are optimistic about their ability to replicate it for Ebola and for other communicable diseases.

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