

In the News Ebola

There are new items to report regarding the Ebola outbreak in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC):

1. On December 29, the Nebraska Medical Center, located in Omaha, put out a news release that they had accepted a role in monitoring an American healthcare worker (HCW) who had been providing medical care in the DRC and had a **possible** exposure to the Ebola Virus. This HCW was transported by private plane and car with the coordination with county, state and federal public health officials.

It is important to note that this person does **NOT** have any symptoms and is **NOT sick**; is also **NOT infectious and cannot make anyone sick**. Monitoring will occur for the up to two weeks and no other patients or the public will have access to the area here the HCW is spending this time. Should any sign or symptoms of Ebola occur, the person would be transferred to their Biocontainment Unit, which is part of the Nebraska Medical Center and staffed by Nebraska Medicine and University of Nebraska Medical Center specially trained personnel.

Should the transfer to the Biocontainment Unit be necessary, this information and appropriate updates will be provided, but no other announcements will be made by Nebraska Medical Center regarding this person unless that occurs. Ted Cieslak, MD, an associate professor of epidemiology at the UNMC and an infectious disease expert with Nebraska Medicine stated that, "Should any symptoms develop, the Nebraska Medicine/UNMC team is among the most qualified in the world to deal with them." This team does have experience with Ebola since they treated three (3) patients during the Ebola outbreak of 2014/15 and then monitored more individuals for Ebola, after exposures to the disease. Since that outbreak, infectious disease personnel from Nebraska Medicine and the University of Nebraska Medical School have trained other health care workers from the US and the World in dealing with Ebola and other high risk infectious diseases.

2. As of January 2, the DRC reported that there have now been 609 cases of Ebola; 561 confirmed cases and 48 probable; 370 have died and 208 are well. A total of 55 health care workers (HCW) have been diagnosed with Ebola and 18 have died. The WHO reported that the outbreak is continuing in spite of the use of an effective vaccine and four (4) Ebola treatments due to poor infection control in some health care centers, as well as violence and security concerns in outbreak areas, and community distrust and resistance.

Ebola operations in some areas were scaled back during the election on December 30, due to increased violence, but have now resumed full operational status, according to the WHO. They also reported that there have been increased numbers of cases reported after operations have been curtailed previously. A vaccination worker was wounded during operations surrounding the election and another went missing. The missing worker has been found and reunited; the injured worker was flown out of the region for more advanced care.

3. Refugees have fled the violence that occurred associated with the election and crossed the border into Uganda. The Red Cross reported that some were sent back to the DRC when they refused screening at the border, which had been put in place by Ugandan authorities. Border crossings increase the risk of spread to other countries.