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French guidelines for the outpatient management of Ebola virus disease : applicability by general practitioners?

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Background: An alarming Ebola virus disease outbreak took place in Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone from March 2014 to May 2016. It led to an international public health emergency. The French Ministry of Health developed guidelines on Ebola virus disease (EVD) for outpatient management. The aim of the study was to assess general practitioners' (GP) knowledge about EVD, to assess their practical conditions, and to collect their opinion about the applicability of these guidelines.

Material/methods: We carried out a transversal quantitative study (survey by telephone or email) among GP's practicing in a high immigration area, from November 2014 to June 2015, during EVD outbreak. We studied further on interesting results performing a qualitative study (interviews) based on grounded theory, among GP's presenting different profiles (age, sex, urban or rural area, high and low immigration area) to obtain an illustrative sample of French GP's, from June to September 2016, after the end of EVD outbreak. We set aside our prejudices to plan the interviews' guide, to relate the quantitative and the qualitative studies and to try not to influence the participants.

Results: 33/100 GP called answered our survey (answer rate of 33%). We interviewed 5 GP's. They acquired a good knowledge of the EVD as the epidemic spread. Mail before the email was considered the best means of information. The application of the guidelines lied on their simplicity of comprehension and application. In other words, it lied on common sense: interrogation, isolation without examination, and call for emergency medical services. The main difficulty to apply these guidelines was the unusual recommended equipment for the practice of a GP. It seemed unnecessary since the management of the patients wasn't based on physical examination. Except for the education

of their secretary to screen suspected patients to send them directly to the emergency medical services, EVD had a poor impact on GP's practice. Indeed the epidemic didn't spread in France, and the Ebola emergency became relative.

Conclusions: GP's acquired a good knowledge of EVD and the guidelines, in spite of the absence of an epidemic in France and of the poor impact on GP's practice. This seemed important to prevent an outbreak in France since they remained vigilant and were ready to cope with such a situation, thanks to simple guidelines they could easily adjust to their practice.

Figure 1. Modelling the results of the interviews of GP's about their opinion of the French guidelines on Ebola Virus Disease for outpatient management.

