Ebola Virus Disease (EVD) outbreak in Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)

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Situation report 21 May, 2017

On 9 May 2017, WHO was informed of the eighth outbreak of Ebola virus disease (EVD) in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). A cluster of undiagnosed illness and deaths including haemorrhagic symptoms in Likati Health Zone, Bas Uele Province, in the north of the DRC with nine cases including three deaths have been reported. As of 20 May 2017, a total of 37 suspected EVD cases and four deaths have been reported giving a case fatality rate of 11%. No healthcare workers have been affected to date. Two cases of EVD were confirmed by the national reference laboratory in Kinshasa. The EVD subtype involved seems to be Zaire. The majority of cases presented with fever, vomiting, bloody diarrhoea and other bleeding conditions.

A public health response including reactivation of the national committee against viral haemorrhagic fever and strengthening of surveillance and investigation including contact tracing was implemented. As of 20 May, 362 contacts remain under strict surveillance. Moreover, WHO is providing assistance and technical support, together with a Médecins Sans Frontières team. The Global Outbreak Alert and Response Network (GOARN) has been activated to provide additional support if required. Under discussion are the need and feasibility of EVD vaccination.

Of note, the area where the outbreak is reported, i.e. Likati Health Zone, is a remote and hard-to-reach zone, geographically relatively limited. However, assessment of the full extent of the outbreak is still ongoing; therefore, high vigilance still needs to be maintained.

Since 1976 seven EVD outbreak occurred in DRC. The last one occurred in 2014, during the EVD epidemic that began in December 2013 and mainly affected Guinea, Liberia, and Sierra Leone. However, the DRC outbreak was a separated unrelated outbreak of EVD first reported to WHO on 24 Aug 2014 ending 3 months later, involving Boende, Tshuapa province, in the DRC. This outbreak caused 66 EVD cases with 49 deaths.

WHO does not recommend any restriction of travel and trade to DRC based on the currently available information.

Nicola Petrosillo & Eskild Petersen
ESCMID Taskforce on Emerging Infections