

Ebola Virus Poses No Significant Risk to Californians

Date: 8/8/2014

Number: 14-071

Contact: Anita Gore (916) 440-7259

SACRAMENTO

The risk of the spread of Ebola virus disease (Ebola) in California is low, according to California Department of Public Health Director and State Health Officer Dr. Ron Chapman. No suspect cases requiring testing have been identified in California.

“While the risk is low, state and local public health officials in California are monitoring the situation closely and taking steps to keep Californians safe,” said Dr. Chapman. “It is important that Californians understand that while we should be aware of the disease and its symptoms, it is extremely unlikely that Ebola poses a public health risk to the people in California. Our advanced health care system has appropriate protocols in place to prevent the spread of this often deadly disease.”

Ebola is an infectious disease caused by the Ebola virus. Symptoms may appear anywhere from 2 to 21 days after exposure and include fever, headache, joint and muscle aches, weakness, diarrhea, vomiting, stomach pain and abnormal bleeding. It is classified as a viral hemorrhagic fever (VHF) because of the fever and abnormal bleeding. Among the VHFs, Ebola is feared because of its high mortality. There are no specific treatments but supportive therapy can be provided to address bleeding and other complications.

“Any patient suspected of having Ebola can be safely managed in a California hospital following recommended isolation and infection control procedures,” said Dr. Chapman.

Important facts about Ebola based on current science include:

- People cannot get Ebola through the air, food or water.
- Ebola virus is transmitted through direct contact with bodily fluids of an infected person with symptoms or through exposure to objects (such as needles) that have been contaminated.
- Persons who do not have symptoms are not contagious.
- Persons at highest risk for Ebola include health care workers and family and friends of infected patients.
- Early identification of cases is crucial.
- Effective isolation of patients and appropriate infection control measures applied to any suspect Ebola patient would contain any potential spread.

The current Ebola outbreak is centered on the countries of Liberia, Guinea, Sierra Leone and Nigeria. As of August 4, 2014, according to the World Health Organization, 1,711 cases and 932 deaths have been reported in the affected countries. To date, other than the two American victims infected in West Africa and recently flown to the United States for hospitalization and treatment, no cases have been reported in the United States. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has issued a travel warning to these countries, as well as guidelines for evaluating, testing and using infection control on U.S. patients suspected of having Ebola.