

EBOLA VIRUS DISEASE

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The issue of Ebola Virus disease (EVD) has become of great concern because of the lack of available treatment for the deadly disease. The outbreak ongoing mainly in Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea has affected about 1,323 people over half of whom have died according to the World Health organization (WHO). The time of the year that is a peak season for free travel between nations has further worsened the fear. To circumvent the spread of the disease, nations including United States are taking precautions by issuing travel advisory warning to avoid the three places where the outbreak has been identified. The director of the Center for Disease Control (CDC) in United States has said that US is not anticipating a potential for outbreak, because precautionary measures are in place.

Ebola Virus disease was first reported in Democratic Republic of Congo in 1976. There have been reports of outbreaks in different places in Africa, including Sudan, Congo and Gabon. EBV has been transmitted to United States between 1989 and 19996 via imported monkeys, but major outbreaks have not been reported.

What are the Symptoms and signs?

Recall that Ebola is a virus, and the initial presentation may include nonspecific before people become very sick. Not all symptoms are present in everyone.

General: fever, weakness, decreased appetite, headache

Muscular/skeletal: Joint and muscle aches

Gastrointestinal: stomach pain, vomiting and diarrhea

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Skin: rash

Pulmonary: cough, difficulty breathing, chest pain

Hematological: Bleeding both internally and externally

Others: sore throat, hiccups, red eyes, abnormal liver and kidney function

How is EBV transmitted?

Humans are not the natural host of EBV. They become infected by close contact with body fluids of infected animals. Some of the animals reported to have been infected include gorillas, chimpanzee, monkeys, fruit bats, pigs, forest antelopes and porcupines. Infected Humans spread disease among themselves by close contact with infected body fluids. Such transmission occurs with handling dead bodies, caring closely for sick people without adequate precautions and protection. Delay in diagnosis could increase the risk of more people being exposed to the disease. If the environment is contaminated with infected body fluids, humans can also pick up EBV through broken skin and mucous membranes. It takes between 2 to 21 days from the time of infection to clinical disease. Some people who do not develop severe disease may go undiagnosed, but can still infect others.

Of note is that men who get over the disease can still transmit the virus in semen for up to seven weeks. Health workers because of close contact with body secretions of the sick are at increased risk when they do not strictly adhere to infection control practices.

Diagnosis

The main stay is high index of suspicion in the right setting. Special tests can be done in the laboratory to identify EBD. Extreme precautions must be taken when handling suspected samples.

Treatment

It is mainly supportive as there is neither vaccine nor medication that currently cures EBD.

Preventing EBD

Prevention is critical to curtailing any outbreak. If there is any suspicion of infection, quarantine the person. When dealing with infected people standard precautions should be taken. Standard precautions including regular hand washing and wearing protective equipments (gloves, gowns) should be strictly adhered to at all times.

Animal that are consumed should be thoroughly cooked.

Avoid transporting animals from infected areas to other places.

Reduce direct contact with dead body of a previously infected person.

Avoid travel to areas with outbreak if you can postpone your trip.

Take home message

Always practice regular hand washing when dealing with any sick person or when you go to hospital environment.

Follow any precautions pasted on the door of a sick person in the hospital setting.

Dr. Oluwatoyosi Dairo can be contacted at Amazing Medical Service, 110-16 Sutphin Blvd, Jamaica NY 11435 or by phone at 718-526-7600.

Disclaimer: This article is for educational purposes, it does not replace the advice of your doctor

References

<http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs103/en/>