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August 9, 2019

To: All Regional Health Authority Medical Health Officers and Hospital Emergency Department Physicians

Important Information on Ebola Virus Disease

On July 17, 2019, the World Health Organization declared a **Public Health Emergency of International Concern regarding the Ebola outbreak in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC)**. This letter is to ensure regional health authorities and emergency departments are aware that Ebola remains a threat globally and we must be prepared to safely evaluate and care for someone who might have been exposed.

A protocol has been established in BC for all physicians to **immediately notify their local Medical Health Officer (MHO) if they suspect EVD in any patient**. If the patient is in a hospital, the hospital infection control/medical microbiologist should also be immediately contacted. While a risk assessment is being discussed with the MHO, the patient should be placed in a single room with the door closed or in an isolation room if available. Physicians must not send a patient suspected of having EVD to a community laboratory. The BC Ambulance Service is prepared to transport patients to emergency departments. If the patient is able to travel by private vehicle, the emergency department must be notified ahead of time.

National and provincial guidance documents related to infection control, laboratory work-up, clinical guidance, public health management and notifications are posted on the [BC Ministry of Health](#) website.

Detailed protocols for primary care physicians: <http://www.health.gov.bc.ca/pho/pdf/bc-ebola-virus-disease-primary-care-guidelines.pdf>

Detailed protocols for Emergency Departments: <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/health/about-bc-s-health-care-system/office-of-the-provincial-health-officer/ed-risk-assessment-algorithm.pdf>.

Details on public health follow up and management of contacts including returning healthcare workers <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/health/about-bc-s-health-care-system/office-of-the-provincial-health-officer/british-columbia-ebola-virus-disease-evd-contact-investigation-and-management-guideline.pdf>.

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Additional national documents can also be found on the [Public Health Agency of Canada](#) website.

Ebola virus disease (EVD)

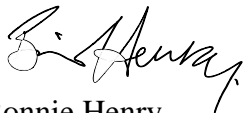
Ebola virus disease is a severe disease that causes hemorrhagic fever in humans and animals. Diseases that cause viral hemorrhagic fevers, such as Ebola, are often fatal as they affect the body's vascular system and can lead to significant internal bleeding and organ failure.

Information on Ebola virus disease, including symptoms, prevention and treatment, is available at the BC Centre for Disease Control (BCCDC) and the Public Health Agency of Canada. The Ebola virus does not spread easily from person to person. It is spread through direct contact with infected bodily fluids, particularly blood, vomitus and feces. It is not spread through casual contact. An infected individual is contagious only once symptoms appear. Other illnesses are much more prevalent in this region and should also be considered (e.g., Malaria). Ill patients require intensive supportive care and early treatment appears to improve survival significantly. For detailed information on the situation in Africa refer to the [World Health Organization](#) updates.

There have not been any cases of Ebola in Canada and the risk to people in BC remains very low. There are airport screening measures in place in all affected countries. It is possible, however, that a traveler may present to a physician's office or to the emergency department with fever and other symptoms of EVD within the 21-day incubation period.

The Office of the Provincial Health Officer, the BCCDC and regional health authorities will continue to collaborate within BC and both nationally and internationally as the EVD situation evolves. It is expected to take many more months before the situation in DRC is controlled. Until that happens, the risk of importation of a case of EVD into BC remains a possibility, although remote. Physicians are encouraged to remain vigilant and connect with their health authority leads and their local MHOs if they have any concerns.

Sincerely,



Bonnie Henry
MD, MPH, FRCPC
Provincial Health Officer