PRESS RELEASE

NETEC advises healthcare workers to remain vigilant with travel screening protocol and review their special pathogens preparedness plans as Ebola outbreak in Uganda claims more than 20 lives

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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As global health authorities report that at least 50 probable and confirmed cases of Ebola disease caused by Sudan virus (SVD), including 24 deaths, have occurred across three Ugandan districts, experts from the National Emerging Special Pathogens Training and Education Center (NETEC) advise that healthcare agencies review their special pathogens preparedness plans and remain vigilant in implementing identify, isolate, and inform strategies to reduce potential exposures in their facilities.

"Clinicians should pay particular attention to enforcing strong infection prevention and control measures, including screening for travel and symptoms at facility entrance points and maintaining masking and hand hygiene among symptomatic individuals," advises Dr. John Lowe, Co-Principal Investigator for NETEC and Executive Director of the Global Center for Health Security at the University of Nebraska Medical Center.

SVD is a severe, often fatal, viral hemorrhagic fever affecting humans. The virus is introduced into the human population through close contact with the blood, secretions, organs, or other bodily fluids of infected animals. In human-to-human transmission, the virus spreads through direct contact (through broken skin or mucous membranes) with either blood or body fluids, or objects that have been contaminated with body fluids (like blood, feces, vomit), from a person sick with or who has died from SVD.

"As always, it is vital that healthcare workers on the frontlines of outbreaks like these have the tools that they need to protect themselves and their communities from infection," Dr. Lowe continued. "For healthcare agencies that need support, NETEC offers free training, resources, and direct consultation to help ensure that clinicians can safely and effectively care for patients infected by high consequence pathogens like SVD."

On Tuesday, September 20, 2022 Uganda health authorities declared an outbreak of Ebola disease caused by Sudan ebolavirus (SVD) following laboratory confirmation of a patient from a village in Madudu sub-county, Mubende district, central Uganda. Unlike recent Ebola disease outbreaks in the Democratic Republic of the Congo caused by the Zaire ebolavirus, there is no vaccine against the Sudan ebolavirus. Based on available evidence, the ERVEBO vaccine, which provides immunity to Ebola caused by the Zaire ebolavirus, does not provide cross-protection against SVD.

The risk of multiple disease transmission chains and serious public health impact in affected regions remains high owing to multiple factors, including community deaths, limited infection prevention and control measures in care facilities, unavailability of adequate prevention and treatment therapeutics, and the absence of licensed vaccines. While the currently affected Ugandan districts have no international borders, the risk of international spread cannot be ruled out due to the active cross-border population movement and international travel.

NETEC provides free expert consultation, technical support, and clinical resources for frontline clinicians, researchers, and health care agencies, including resources on PPE, specimen collection, infection prevention and waste management, and specialized guidance for EMS professionals, researchers, and more. Clinicians can access NETEC's services through the online service request portal, by emailing info@netec.org, or by visiting NETEC.org.

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ABOUT NETEC

Established in 2015 by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Office of the Assistant Secretary for Preparedness and Response (ASPR) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) following the successful treatment of Ebola patients in 2014, NETEC's mission is to set the gold standard for special pathogen preparedness and response across health systems in the U.S. with the goals of driving best practices, closing knowledge gaps, and developing innovative resources.

NETEC leverages the unique expertise, resources, and experience of regional partners and federal agencies to assess health care facility readiness, train providers, provide technical assistance and build a rapid research infrastructure to combat emerging special pathogens, building a sustainable infrastructure and culture of readiness for managing suspected and confirmed special pathogen incidents across the United States public health and health care delivery systems. Visit NETEC.org for more information.