PRESS RELEASE

NETEC provides free, ongoing technical support and assistance to health care facilities in response to the outbreak of Mpox disease in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Since January 1, 2023, there have been a total of 12,569 suspected Mpox cases, including 581 suspected Mpox deaths (case fatality ratio: 4.6%), reported in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).

The National Emerging Special Pathogens Training and Education Center (NETEC) offers support for U.S. health care agencies that encounter or may encounter a case of Mpox virus infection with free, ongoing guidance and resources. NETEC experts are available to provide free consultations and technical support services through NETEC's online service request portal and at info@netec.org.

Mpox disease is caused by the Mpox Virus (MPXV), of which there are two known clades: clade I, previously known as the Congo Basin clade or the Central African clade; and clade II, previously called the West African clade. Clade II is responsible for the global Mpox epidemic that began in 2022. The current outbreak in the DRC is clade I.

Clade I MPXV is known for more severe clinical manifestations compared to other clades. This variant is characterized by a higher rate of transmission, increased virulence, and a greater potential for causing serious health complications. The symptoms typically include fever, rash, and swollen lymph nodes, and can lead to more severe outcomes, especially in immunocompromised individuals.

Due to its heightened virulence and transmission potential, waste involving clade I MPXV is classified as a Category A infectious substance. The categorization underlines the need for high-level precautions in health care settings and laboratories to manage the risk associated with this outbreak.

"NETEC is working with federal partners and Regional Emerging Special Pathogen Treatment Centers (RESPTCs) across the country to ensure proper management of any patient suspected of infection with clade I MPXV. We remind all health care facilities to identify, isolate, and inform – and to make use of the extensive resources available on the NETEC website," notes Aneesh Mehta, Co-Principal Investigator for NETEC at Emory University.

Mpox is a rare but potentially serious viral illness that typically begins with flu-like symptoms, followed by a rash that often begins on the face and then spreads to other parts of the body.

Some individuals have had genital lesions, and the rash may be hard to distinguish from syphilis, herpes simplex virus (HSV) infection, chancroid, varicella zoster, and other more common infections.

Guidance issued by the CDC on December 7 advises that while cases of clade I MPXV have not been reported in the United States at this time, clinicians should be aware of the possibility of clade I MPXV in travelers who have been in DRC. Clinicians should notify their state/jurisdictional health department or local health department if they have a patient with Mpox-like symptoms, which may include a diffuse rash and lymphadenopathy, and recent travel to DRC. Clinicians should also submit lesion specimens for clade-specific testing for these patients.

Vaccines (e.g., JYNNEOS, ACAM2000) and other medical countermeasures (e.g., tecovirimat, brincidofovir, and vaccinia immune globulin intravenous) are available and expected to be effective for both clade I and clade II MPXV infections. However, vaccination coverage in the United States remains low, with only one in four people who are eligible to receive the vaccine having received both doses of JYNNEOS. CDC recommends that clinicians encourage vaccination for patients who are eligible.

For more about Mpox or to request technical assistance, visit NETEC.org and the CDC.

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ABOUT NETEC

Established in 2015 by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Office of the Administration for Strategic 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.