



Update on Ebola Preparations

As you may know, the first diagnosed case of Ebola in the United States was confirmed several weeks ago by the Centres for Disease Control and Prevention. More recently, two health professionals who treated that individual have been confirmed to have Ebola.

This news is concerning for all of us working in health care. We need to remember the Public Health Agency of Canada continues to indicate the overall risk in Canada of Ebola is very low, but at the same time we cannot ignore what has occurred in the United States.

I want to assure you we are prepared. National, provincial, and our own regional public health officials are actively monitoring the virus' movement. Operationally, we are prepared in the rare event we need to respond to Ebola should cases be identified in Winnipeg. We continue to work with Public Health, Manitoba Health, and emergency medical services to plan, prepare, and adapt our response plan. As well, the Province of Manitoba's Public Health Branch, with input from the Office of Disaster Management, is coordinating the Manitoba health system's preparedness to the Ebola situation.

Our planning efforts have focused on and involved those most likely to encounter Ebola in the rare event it arrives in Winnipeg or Manitoba, and we need to respond and manage an active Ebola case. As part of these efforts, a number of key steps have been undertaken:

- The Health Sciences Centre has been designated the site within the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority, and within the province, to care for any suspected case of Ebola. However, we know that patients with symptoms consistent with Ebola may spontaneously present elsewhere in the health system. Our planning is focused on addressing both of these important considerations.
- At Health Sciences Centre staff are being trained in the protocols for care and the use of the required personal protective equipment to provide that care in the Emergency Department and the dedicated inpatient areas where that care will occur. Staff training is ongoing.
- Pursuant to the recommendation from the Public Health Agency of Canada, travel history is being asked of patients presenting with symptoms possibly consistent with Ebola. This includes emergency departments across the region as well as primary care

offices and clinics. Primary Care staff are receiving training on the travel screening and the immediate actions to take to ensure staff and patient safety. (see below).

- Staff at our other Emergency Departments and Urgent Care Centre are receiving training on the required screening of suspected cases and the protocols for consultations and referral to Health Sciences Centre if necessary. Training on the required personal protective equipment is also being provided in the event emergency care is required. The recommended personal protective equipment for managing Ebola cases has been ordered and distributed to hospitals, emergency rooms, and emergency medical services personnel.
- Initial training efforts have been targeted to those staff most likely to encounter Ebola. Further training will be ongoing across the Region. To date, more than 400 staff who may be required to provide hands on care for people with Ebola have been trained in the use of appropriate personal protective equipment.
- Our Infection Prevention & Control and Public Health programs continue to work with Manitoba Health and the Public Health Agency of Canada to ensure our Region's infection control standards are aligned with what is being recommended as best practice when responding to Ebola cases.
- An operational directive regarding the management and response to a suspected case of Ebola have been developed and distributed and can be accessed here: <http://www.wrha.mb.ca/prog/ipc/index.php>.
- We have been coordinating weekly conference calls with sites and programs regarding Ebola preparedness, and have been actively participating in provincial coordination and planning.

Despite our planning and preparations so far, many of you remain worried about what to do in the rare event you encounter a member of the public who spontaneously presents somewhere in our health system with symptoms consistent with EVD **and** they suggest they recently returned from an Ebola affected country.

To ensure your own safety and the safety of others, you should follow these four key steps:

1. Take a "no-touch" approach to the patient, and maintain a two metre (six feet) distance;
2. Provide them with a mask;
3. Isolate them in a separate room; and
4. Contact your Infection Control Professional/designate and/or your manager immediately.

If you or your staff have any questions regarding the planning and preparedness relating to Ebola, or what you should be doing to prepare, I encourage you to contact your manager, site/area Infection Control Professional, the regional Infection Prevention and Control program, or the regional Public Health program. You can also contact me if you have any concerns.