Ebola: Implications for Community Engagement and Communications

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Ebola: Community Engagement and Communications

- Community Engagement and Communications
- Community Preparedness and Community Readiness
- Managing Uncertainty, Mistrust, Stigma
Ebola Transmission

Ebola can only be spread to others after symptoms begin (2 to 21 days after exposure). Ebola is spread through:

• **direct contact**
  – through broken skin or mucous membranes (e.g., eyes, nose, or mouth) with blood or body fluids
  – including but not limited to urine, saliva, sweat, feces, vomit, breast milk, and semen); objects (like needles and syringes) that have been contaminated with the virus

• **infected animals**

Healthcare providers caring for Ebola patients and the family and friends in close contact with Ebola patients are at the **highest risk** of getting sick

Ebola **is not** spread through air, water, or in general, by food.

http://www.cdc.gov/vhf/ebola/transmission/index.html
Ebola and Community Engagement

New Strategies that Engage Communities Are Needed

“We urgently need to come up with new strategies. Currently, helpers are no longer able to care for all the patients in treatment centers. So caregivers need to teach family members who are providing care to patients how to protect themselves from infection to the extent possible.”

Professor Peter Piot
Director of the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine
Discovered Ebola in 1976
Ebola and Community Engagement

Community Engagement Critical to Education, Treatment and Containment and Communications

- One of the things that I think is very important is that, although there’s been a lot of international attention on the number of treatment beds, we will never catch up with the disease simply by focusing on treatment beds. The absolute key is to stop the chain of transmission, which means local engagement, house by house, community by community, street by street, explaining to local people what the dangers are and how they can mitigate them. That’s an absolute priority if this disease is not to get out of control.”

David Miliband, Former UK former foreign secretary, Head of the International Rescue Committee, October 2014

http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/oct/09/ebola-david-miliband-warns-tipping-point
Ebola and Community Engagement

The World Health Organization has Created a Social Mobilization Team as a Critical Part of Its Intervention Strategy

WHO is strengthening community engagement and empowerment to halt and reverse the Ebola virus disease outbreak by:

- reaching individuals, households and communities
- increasing awareness and skills about Ebola transmission,
- prevention, treatment and safe burial practices
- communities are encouraged to report early any early signs and symptoms,
- not to keep dead bodies in the homes and to practice safe burials
Crisis is Outpacing Resources

Ebola deaths
Up to 5 October

3,865 Deaths now 4000+
(probable, confirmed and suspected)

2,210 Liberia
768 Guinea
879 Sierra Leone
8 Nigeria

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Existing bed capacity</th>
<th>Total beds needed</th>
<th>Extra beds still required</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Guinea</td>
<td>160</td>
<td>210</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberia</td>
<td>620</td>
<td>2,930</td>
<td>2,310</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sierra Leone</td>
<td>304</td>
<td>1,148</td>
<td>844</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: WHO, 8 October 2014
Ebola and Community Engagement

“What we do to stop Ebola is to break the links of transmission.”

Dr. Tom Frieden, CDC
October 12, 2014
Communications Critical to Engagement

• New information on Ebola is emerging daily
• CDC and health systems balance educating the public, managing uncertainty and fear, ensuring transparency
• External and internal communication plans important
• Social media expedite communications; complicate miscommunications
Communications Critical to Engagement

• Communications became more urgent when Ebola came to the US

• Messages seem confusing to public
  – “The deadly outbreak of Ebola virus in West Africa is unlikely to spread outside of that region and into the United States.” Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, July 28.
    • Eric Duncan becomes the first person in the US to have the Ebola virus (Sept 28).
  – “The disease is unlikely to impact additional patients in the area.” (Frieden, Sept 30)
    • "It is possible that we will see more Ebola cases.” – Frieden, Oct 12.

• Information is needed to address questions
Communications and Perceptions

Data shows:

• There is worry that there will be an outbreak of Ebola in the U.S.  Harvard School of Public Health Study (August, 2014);

• There is fear that they or someone they know will contract Ebola  Harvard School of Public Health Study (August, 2014)

• Within 1 hour after news broke of the first Ebola case in the US, more than 50,000 tweets about Ebola flew through Twitter.

• CDC is getting 800 queries a day about the Ebola virus.  CDC Debriefing, 10/5/14

• There are a number of false alarms (e.g. flu, MERS, typhoid fever, etc.).

• Some health personnel feel they need training on how to manage Ebola and how to use equipment  National Nurses United, Survey - Oct. 2014
Local Communications

- Cincinnati Children’s Website, Email
- Cincinnati Health Department
- Greater Cincinnati Health Council
Community Preparedness/Readiness

- Training/Planning → Infrastructure; Protocols; Communication; Compliance
- Communications Coordination → Information Dissemination;
- Care Management → Resources; Personnel
- Tracing/Tracking → Complex Systems; Mobility; Trust
- Waste/Disposal → Expertise (Complex); High Risk; Volume
- Systems Coordination → Multi-Systems; Management; Resources; Sustainability
Managing Uncertainty, Mistrust and Stigma

To engage the public …..

• Reach out to those at highest risk for education and planning
• Provide transparency in communication; reduce the potential for panic and fear
• Minimize stigma attributed to ebola patients and contacts
• Ensure that patients receive equal access to care
• Ensure that all patients receive equal access to treatments
Ebola: Implications for Public Health

Dr. Steven Englender,
Director, Center for Public Health Preparedness
Cincinnati Health Department

Panel and Q&A