

Ebola

Ebola, a filovirus, is one of the causes of viral hemorrhagic fever. It usually leads to small outbreaks in isolated areas of western and central Africa. This changed when the largest Ebola outbreak ever reported affected West Africa from December 2013 to 2016 with 28,616 cases and 11,310 deaths to date.¹

Although only a small number of cases were exported or were infected outside West Africa, the outbreak caused high levels of concern in many countries due to a real or perceived lack of preparedness. A BC Ebola Task Force involving the entire healthcare sector was formed in October 2014 to support provincial Ebola preparedness efforts.

No Ebola cases occurred in BC or Canada. However, the BC public health system did identify and monitor 173 Ebola contacts² in BC between August 2014 and February 2016. All of these individuals were travelers returning from Liberia, Guinea or Sierra Leone. A total of 134 (77.5%) contacts were categorized as low risk (i.e. were present in an affected country without any known exposure to Ebola) and 39 (22.5%) as medium risk (i.e. had contact with Ebola while wearing appropriate Personal Protective Equipment or was health-

care worker in affected country with no known Ebola contact). Only 3 contacts under monitoring developed symptoms compatible with Ebola and all tested negative for Ebola.

BC Ebola preparedness efforts increased the healthcare sector's capacity to respond to emerging infectious diseases and are being converted into more comprehensive and sustainable emergency preparedness plans.

1. WHO. Ebola Situation Report. 19 May 2016. Available from <http://www.who.int/csr/disease/ebola/en/> Accessed on May 25 2016.

2. Provincial Ebola Expert Working Group. BC Ebola Virus Disease Contact Investigation and Management Guideline. Apr 22 2015. Available from: <http://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> Accessed on May 25 2016.