September 2014

Ebola Outbreak in West Africa

SUNY Potsdam is monitoring the Ebola virus outbreak in several West African countries, as well as advisories from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the New York State Department of Health. SUNY Administration has recently prohibited “campus sponsored travel to countries where the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has issued a travel warning.”

This ban affects future travel to Guinea, Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Nigeria. While SUNY Potsdam has not identified anyone in our campus community who has recently traveled to these areas for campus-sponsored events, some in our community may have traveled there privately over the summer. As our campus convenes for the new semester, SUNY Potsdam wants any returning travelers to be aware of some safety precautions.

Individuals without symptoms are not contagious. However, travelers to Guinea, Liberia, Sierra Leone, or Nigeria should monitor their health upon their return. If you have traveled to the affected countries and become ill, even if only with a fever, you should avoid contact with other people and consult a healthcare provider immediately. Please call before arriving in your medical provider’s office, the Emergency Department, or the Student Health Services office. Students, faculty, and staff are encouraged to call Student Health Services for advice at (315) 267-2377.

Asymptomatic travelers to Western Africa with no known contact with Ebola should monitor their health for 10 days. Those with a potential exposure should monitor their health for 21 days after exposure. Any of the following symptoms should prompt them to call their medical provider:

- fever
- headache
- joint or muscle aches
- weakness
- diarrhea
- vomiting
- stomach pain
- lack of appetite
- abnormal bleeding

Here are some brief facts on Ebola from the CDC: Ebola virus is the cause of a viral hemorrhagic fever disease. Symptoms include fever, headache, joint and muscle aches, weakness, diarrhea, vomiting, stomach pain, lack of appetite, and abnormal bleeding. Symptoms may appear anywhere from 2 to 21 days after exposure to ebola virus, though 8 to 10 days after exposure is most common. Ebola is transmitted through direct contact with the blood or bodily fluids of an infected symptomatic person or through exposure to objects (such as needles) that have been contaminated with infected secretions. Ebola is not a respiratory disease like the flu, so it is not transmitted through the air. Ebola is not a food-borne or water-borne illness. Individuals who are not symptomatic are not contagious. In order for the virus to be transmitted, an individual would have to have direct contact with an individual who is experiencing symptoms.

For more information on monitoring and recommendations during this Ebola outbreak please visit:

CDC website http://www.cdc.gov/vhf/ebola/
http://www.cdc.gov/vhf/ebola/outbreaks/guinea/qa.html

SUNY Administration webpage www.suny.edu/health-alert

Please contact Student Health Services at (315) 267-2377 if you have any questions or concerns.