

3 SEASONAL DISEASES

4 INTERNATIONAL OUTBREAKS OF IMPORTANCE TO SOUTH AFRICAN TRAVELLERS AND HEALTHCARE WORKERS

a Ebola virus disease (EVD) outbreak

There has been a re-emergence of EVD in Liberia after the country was declared Ebola free for the second time on 3 September 2015. In the week ending 22 November 2015, three laboratory-confirmed EVD cases, all from the same family, were reported. The first case-patient was a 15-year-old male who presented at a hospital in Monrovia on 17 November, tested positive for EVD on 19 November and died on 23 November 2015. Subsequently, two of his family members (younger brother and father) were also confirmed as having EVD. The two family members have since recovered and both tested negative twice for Ebola virus on 3 December 2015. However, 165 associated contacts are being monitored of whom 15 are considered high-risk.

In Guinea, no new laboratory-confirmed EVD cases were reported since 29 October 2015. The last laboratory-confirmed EVD case in Guinea tested negative twice for Ebola virus on 16 November 2015. In both Sierra Leone and Guinea, the 90-day enhanced surveillance period is currently underway. As at 6 December 2015, a cumulative total of 28 601 cases (laboratory-confirmed, probable and suspected) including 11 300 deaths with a case fatality rate of 40% has been reported in Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone. A summary of case numbers and deaths reported is shown in Table 1.

Following reports that Ebola virus can persist in semen for months after recovery, a modelling study was conducted to estimate the number of men who recovered from EVD (in Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone) possibly to have Ebola virus RNA present in semen (Reference). In this study, a fitted negative binomial distribution model by method of maximum likelihood was used. Their results indicate that the number of men with detectable Ebola virus RNA in semen at present remains low and is on the decline. It is estimated that in January 2016, the number of Ebola virus semen-positive individuals will be 73 as compared to 2 255 in January 2015. Nonetheless, promotion of sexual health and EVD surveillance remain crucial and should be continued as a single incident could lead to another widespread and intense transmission of EVD.

Situation in South Africa

As at 9 December 2015 there have been no EVD

cases in South Africa associated with the current outbreaks in West Africa. In addition, there are no suspected cases of EVD in South Africa at present. The risk of Ebola being introduced into South Africa still remains low. However a high index of suspicion is always necessary given the history of viral haemorrhagic fever in West Africa.

Testing for viral haemorrhagic fever viruses (including Ebola virus) in South Africa is only available at the NICD. EVD testing is neither warranted nor useful for persons that are not suffering from a clinical illness compatible with EVD, even in the event of compatible travel histories. The tests cannot be used to determine if the patient has been exposed to the virus and may develop the disease later. Requests for testing (with a detailed clinical, travel and exposure history) should be directed to the NICD Hotline at 082 883 9920 (a 24-hour service, for healthcare professionals only)

Reference: Eggo R, Watson C, Camacho A, Kucharski A, Funk S, Edmunds W. Duration of Ebola virus RNA persistence in semen of survivors: population-level estimates and projections. *Euro Surveill.* 2015;20(48):pii=30083.

DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.2807/1560-7917.ES.2015.20.48.30083>
<http://www.eurosurveillance.org/ViewArticle.aspx?ArticleId=21326>

Source: Division of Public Health Surveillance and Response, NICD-NHLS

Table 1. Number of Ebola virus disease cases and deaths in Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone (as at 6 December 2015)

Country	Total cases (laboratory-confirmed, probable and suspected)	Total deaths	Case fatality rate	Number of cases among healthcare workers (number of deaths)
Guinea	3 804	2 536	67%	196 (100)
Sierra Leone	14 122	3 955	28%	307 (221*)
Liberia (as at 9 May)	10 666	4 806	45%	378 (192)
Liberia (from 29 June)	9	3	33%	
Totals	28 601	11 300	40%	881 (513)

Source: World Health Organization: Ebola outbreak - Ebola situation report of 9 December 2015 (www.who.int); *Data as at 17 February