

b Ebola virus disease outbreak in West Africa: update

The outbreak of Ebola virus disease (EVD) in West Africa which was first reported in a World Health Organization communiqué on 23 March 2014 is ongoing. Available evidence suggests that the outbreak began in Guinea's Guéckédou Prefecture during December 2013, with subsequent spread to other prefectures in Guinea (including the capital Conakry), as well as neighbouring Liberia and Sierra Leone. All three countries reported new cases during the week of 16 June 2014, indicating ongoing transmission of EVD. The cumulative number of cases and deaths are shown in Table 1.

The risk of infection for travellers is very low since most human infections result from direct contact with the body fluids or secretions of infected patients, particularly in hospitals (nosocomial transmission) and as a result of unsafe procedures, use of contaminated medical devices (including needles and syringes) and unprotected exposure to contaminated body fluids. Since the current

outbreak is reported in countries and areas which are not frequented by many tourists or travellers, the risk of EVD cases being imported into South Africa is low. However, healthcare or international agency workers etc. involved in the outbreak response may travel to and present in South Africa for medical care, and a high index of suspicion is important for such cases. A detailed history regarding travel and level of contact with suspected/confirmed EVD cases is extremely important.

Further information for South African healthcare workers regarding the case definition for suspected EVD and laboratory testing can be accessed at www.nicd.ac.za.

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

Table 1. Ebola virus disease outbreak in West Africa: summary of cases as at 22 June 2014

Country	Total cases (laboratory-confirmed, probable and suspected)	Total deaths	Case fatality rate
Guinea	390	267	68%
Liberia	41	25	61%
Sierra Leone	136	58	43%