
A Three-Tier Approach to Ebola Virus Disease Management in Ontario

August 27, 2015

Ebola virus disease (EVD) is associated with a high case fatality rate, particularly when care is initiated late in the course of illness. There is currently transmission of EVD in several countries in West Africa. Although the risk in Canada is currently very low, Ontario's health care system must be prepared for persons with the disease, or incubating the disease, entering the province.

The Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care has developed a three-tier hospital framework to ensure that the health care system is prepared to manage patients with EVD in Ontario. Hospitals in Ontario serve one of three roles: treatment hospitals, testing hospitals and screening hospitals.

Public health units are monitoring travellers from EVD-affected countries in West Africa for a 21-day period. If a traveller develops symptoms compatible with EVD during the monitoring period, the public health unit supports the individual to access a testing or treatment hospital for appropriate care and services.

The ministry identified treatment and testing hospitals based on several considerations, including locations of travellers from EVD-affected countries being monitored by public health units, geographic coverage for people living in Ontario, and hospital laboratory readiness to test persons under investigation (PUI) for other agents and conditions.

Treatment hospitals

Treatment hospitals manage a confirmed EVD case for the duration of the patient's illness, including ongoing testing. Treatment hospitals also maintain all the capabilities of screening and testing hospitals.

The ministry has designated the following treatment hospitals:

- The Hospital for Sick Children (designated to care for confirmed paediatric cases)
- London Health Sciences Centre – Victoria Hospital (designated to care for confirmed adult cases) and the Children's Hospital (designated as the back-up to The Hospital for Sick Children for confirmed paediatric cases)
- The Ottawa Hospital – General Campus (designated to care for confirmed adult cases)
- University Health Network – Toronto Western Hospital (designated to care for a confirmed adult case repatriated from West Africa in addition to confirmed adult cases that are identified in Ontario)

Testing hospitals

Testing hospitals maintain capacity to manage a PUI until EVD is confirmed or ruled out. Testing hospitals can initiate EVD testing on a PUI through the Public Health Ontario Laboratories and can also undertake other laboratory tests to confirm/rule out other more common and potentially fatal diseases.

Once a PUI is determined to be a confirmed case, testing hospitals work with Critical Care Ontario to arrange for the interfacility transfer to a treatment hospital through paramedic services.

Testing hospitals also have all the capabilities of a screening hospital.

The ministry has designated the following EVD testing hospitals:

- The Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario
- Hamilton Health Sciences Centre – Juravinski Hospital (designated for adult PUIs) and McMaster Children's Hospital (designated for paediatric PUIs)
- Health Sciences North
- Kingston General Hospital
- Sunnybrook Health Sciences Centre
- Thunder Bay Regional Health Sciences Centre
- Windsor Regional Hospital – Metropolitan Campus

In the event that Ontario needs more treatment capacity, the ministry may request that testing hospitals expand their training and planning efforts to act as treatment hospitals.

Screening hospitals

Screening hospitals screen ambulatory patients, isolate and assess a suspect patient and manage a PUI until he/she is transferred by paramedic services to a designated treatment or testing hospital.

Screening hospitals may also assess a suspect patient that arrives via paramedic services. When paramedic services identify a suspect patient during a scene response (i.e., 911 call), they attempt to bypass screening hospitals for a low acuity patient. If the distance to a designated testing or treatment hospital is more than one hour's drive time, paramedic services may need to transport the patient to a closer screening hospital for an assessment (to confirm whether testing is needed) as well as to arrange the subsequent transfer to a designated hospital.

Screening hospitals include all hospitals in Ontario with emergency departments and/or urgent care centres.

For more information

The Chief Medical Officer of Health (CMOH) has issued the [Directive #1 for Hospitals](#) that further describes control measures and procedures for treatment, testing and screening hospitals. The CMOH has also issued directives to treatment and testing hospitals on laboratory services and waste management procedures. In addition, the CMOH has issued directives to paramedic services and primary care settings.

For more information, please visit the ministry's EVD website at www.ontario.ca/ebola or contact the ministry's Health Care Provider Hotline by phone at 1-866-212-2272 or by email at emergencymanagement.moh@ontario.ca.