

A MESSAGE TO IPAC CANADA/PCI CANADA MEMBERS RE EBOLA PREPAREDNESS

Infection Prevention and Control Canada/Prévention et contrôle Canada wishes to support our members in this time of heightened concern with the ongoing Ebola Virus Disease (EVD) in West Africa. To date there has yet to be a confirmed case of EVD in Canada, though there have been a number of persons under investigation. The risk of Ebola-infected travelers coming to Canada is low but we need to be prepared.

IPAC Canada's 1650 members from across the country are experts in limiting the transmission of infections in healthcare settings. They work every day to develop policies and protocols and educate healthcare providers on the practices they need to follow in order to prevent transmission. Our national Public Health Agency and affiliated provincial bodies have been working hard over the past several months to refine protocols for dealing with patients infected with Ebola virus. Many of our members have been directly involved in this work. With the recent transmission of the virus to two nurses in Dallas, front-line healthcare providers are facing increasing anxiety.

As infection prevention and control professionals we try to allay those anxieties by ensuring our front-line providers understand what they need to do to keep themselves and others safe. As with any infectious patients, in all instances, a point-of-care risk assessment should be reinforced and healthcare providers should be donning the appropriate personal protective equipment to protect themselves from exposure to potentially infectious body fluids. Equally important are procedures for doffing potentially contaminated personal protective equipment in order to avoid accidental self-contamination of skin and mucous membranes. Most healthcare providers will not be familiar with the procedures necessary for EVD. Our role as infection prevention and control professionals is to provide training and exercising so that staff can feel confident in these procedures and be safe.

The recent Ebola crisis, just as the SARS outbreak in 2003, demonstrates the need for facility-wide infection prevention and control programs with adequately trained, staffed, and resourced infection control departments.

In the past few weeks, IPAC Canada/PCI Canada has become involved in the delivery of guidance and support to both healthcare workers and the community. Namely:

- IPAC Canada/PCI Canada assisted in the mobilization of members to assist with outbreak management in West Africa. Several contingents of experts have been assigned to outbreak management and infection control programs. We thank them for their dedication and selflessness. We welcome back those who are now returning.
- We have developed an Ebola resource page on our website (www.ipac-canada.org) which is being monitored and updated daily by our Webmaster. Other

organizations are linking to our resource page as guidance and information for their own communities of practice.

- We are in collaboration with other stakeholders to help them develop guidance for their members on Ebola preparedness, in particular the infection control precautions that must be in place at all times.
- We have responded to several media request for information.
- IPAC Canada/PCI members have presented to various community groups on the background and precautions for Ebola.
- The Board of Directors, in collaboration with the Network of Networks, is preparing a position statement on the use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) during Ebola. The current Ebola webpage does have instructions on the donning and doffing of PPE.
- The Infection Control Audit Tool Committee, in collaboration with the Network of Networks, and Board of Directors, will be developing an audit tool for the donning and doffing of PPE in Ebola situations.
- IPAC Canada/PCI Canada is making itself immediately available to government, stakeholders, communities and other healthcare providers to ensure vigilant preparedness, prevention and outbreak precautions are in place.

IPAC Canada/PCI continues to support our members as they work diligently to provide infection prevention and control guidance to healthcare workers in their facilities, and stands ready to work with the government and other stakeholders to ensure the highest level of safety for nurses and other front-line healthcare providers who may need to provide care to Ebola patients.

For the Board of Directors of
IPAC Canada/PCI Canada,

Bruce Gamage RN BScN CIC
President

(French translation to be posted to IPAC Canada/PCI Canada website.)