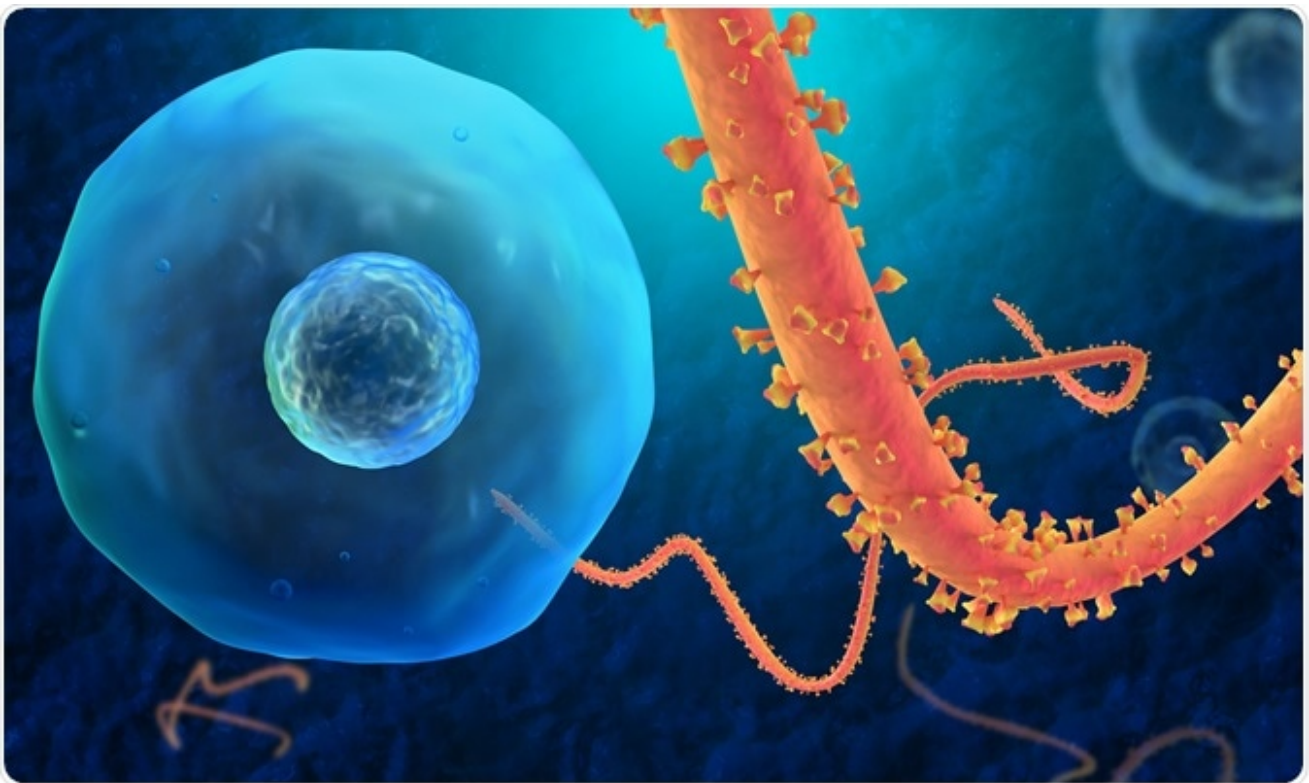


Call for a global alert on Ebola in Democratic Republic of Congo

The Lancet has reported about the alarming status of Ebola in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) on the 4th of this month following a reported 785 deaths due to the disease in the country.



Ebola Virus illustration. Image Credit: Festa / Shutterstock

- The DRC has reported 22 new cases to add to the outbreak.
- Of these 10 are in Katwa region and rest from other regions (Kyondo – 4, Butembo and Kalunguta – 2 each, Mabalako, Mangurujipa, Vuhovi and Mutwanga – 1 each)
- Overall there are total 785 reported cases in this outbreak. Of these 731 are confirmed and 54 are probable
- There are a further 165 suspected cases of Ebola

- There have been 13 new deaths due to ebola (7 of these in the community and 6 in the Ebola treatment centres)
- Community deaths include those in Mangurujipa, Mutwanga, Mabalako, Kyondo, Katwa, and Vuhovi and these are likely sources of spread of the infection say the health officials.

Authors Laurence Gostin, faculty director of Georgetown University's O'Neill Institute for National and Global Health Law, and colleagues, in their letter titled, "Ebola in the Democratic Republic of Congo: Time to sound a global alert?" write that this latest outbreak of Ebola in DRC is the second largest since the 2014 West African epidemic. This makes it the second largest in the history of mankind, they write. The team write about the hurdles that make tackling this outbreak an uphill task including areas riddled with "armed conflict, political instabilities and mass displacement" that make it difficult for help and relief operations to work independently and effectively.

The team writes that the "WHO, the DRC Government, and non-governmental organisation (NGO) partners have shown remarkable leadership but are badly stretched." They warned that the outbreak is "far from controlled" and there is a substantial risk of it becoming a "long-term epidemic with regional, perhaps global, impacts."

The team at present is calling for "high-level political, financial, and technical support to address the Ebola outbreak that started last May" in the DRC. There are fresh warnings about the spread of this disease closer to Goma city. The outbreak now has already reached Butemba that houses around a million people. To United Nations is actively sending help to protect Goma city and also to help them deal with the situation. At present 2000 emergency workers are sent to Goma city to handle the influx of patients with Ebola.

The health care professionals believe that the problem with spread to this city would be the people who do not seek medical help when they contract the disease. There have been reports of locals attacking the emergency workers accusing them of staring and manipulating the outbreak of Ebola. This has compounded the problem, the Doctors Without Borders (Medicins Sans Frontiers) have said. There are rumours about medical staff putting patients in body bags on admission and even removing their organs for sale in the black market etc.

Laurence Saily the emergency coordinator of Doctors Without Borders in the Congolese city Beni in a statement said, "In this situation people might have no other choice than to seek medical help in health facilities that do not have adequate triage or infection prevention and control measures in place, which makes the risk of contamination higher. We are talking about a population that has endured many years of conflict. On top of that, they are now faced with the deadliest Ebola outbreak the country has ever seen. The unrest ... adds even more to their plight by limiting their chances of finding adequate medical care." Emmanuel Massart, project coordinator the Doctors Without Borders at Katwa said, "With more and more cases coming from the city of Butembo, which has a population of almost a million people, it was necessary to set up a second treatment centre very rapidly. Large windows allow our patients to see the faces of the doctors and nurses treating them and make family visits easier, reestablishing some of the human contact that is so hard to maintain in Ebola treatment centres."

Source:

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