

False alarm of Ebola virus in SA

Health Minister Aaron Motsoaledi has dismissed claims that the Ebola Virus Disease has arrived in South Africa.



Health Minister Aaron Motsoaledi says it is "mischievous" to suggest that Ebola has arrived in South Africa without proper medical evidence to back up the claim. Image: GCIS

This after the Democratic Alliance's Jack Bloom caused alarm when he claimed that woman from Guinea, who went into labour at the Rahima Moosa Hospital, west of Johannesburg, had contracted the disease. Mosoaldedi said the woman was tested and her results were negative.

"The PCR is normal test that the National Institute for Communicable Diseases (NICD) does for Ebola. We took precautions and did the serology, although it was not necessary, and it was also negative," said Motsoaledi.

He called an urgent media briefing following allegations that a female patient admitted at a hospital was infected with the disease.

The test, called DoD EZ1 Real-time RT-PCR Assay, is designed for use on individuals who have symptoms of Ebola infection, who are at risk for exposure or who may have been exposed.

"It is not in the interest of the Department of Health to hide Ebola from the public," said Motsoaleli and that it was mischievous of Bloom to say that the disease had entered South Africa.

SAMA asks people to stop spreading rumours

Earlier this week the South African Medical Association (SAMA) urged people using social media to stop spreading rumours about Ebola cases in South Africa, as this caused unnecessary panic.

"Rumours such as these are causing panic and confusion in our nation. We call upon the nation and especially health professionals not to make light of a disease that has claimed over 1 000 victims already.

"Only the national Health Department or designated officials will make such an announcement," said SAMA President, Dr Phophi Ramathuba.

A total of 1,848 cases and 1,013 deaths have been confirmed since the outbreak was reported in West Africa in March.

The World Health Organisation (WHO) declared Ebola in West Africa an international public health emergency that requires international support to affected countries.

Meanwhile, WHO recommended that countries, which are not affected by Ebola so far should strengthen the level of epidemic preparedness and response.

Strengthen diagnostic testing

It also recommended that diagnostic laboratories for EVD be strengthened and training of community health workers on case management and infection prevention and control, should be increased.

In South Africa, the Department of Health is planning to establish an inter-ministerial committee on EVD.



DA member, Jack Bloom has been accused to starting rumours about Ebola being found in a patient from Guinea who was admitted the Rahima Moosa Hospital. Image: [Synapses](#)

All provinces in 44 districts have trained outbreak response teams and regular meetings are convened at national level to monitor the EVD outbreak and preparedness measures.

"The department monitored the risk and assessed the situation as the outbreak unfolded. Risk of infection for travellers is low, since EVD is not transmitted through casual contact. However, preparedness and response measures are needed because of the spread of the disease in many major cities," Motsoaledi said.



The Rahima Mosa Hospital where a suspected victim of the Ebola virus was tested. All tests were negative. Image: [BHCC](#)

Ports of entry monitored

Gauteng, Western Cape and KwaZulu-Natal have been identified as the provinces at the highest risk for importation of the disease as priority ports of entry are at OR Tambo, Lanseria, Cape Town and King Shaka Airports.

The surveillance for viral haemorrhagic fevers, in particular EVD, has been strengthened at ports of entry and thermal scanners have been installed at the OR Tambo and Lanseria Airports.

The National Health Laboratory Service and the National Institute for Communicable Diseases has also intensified laboratory surveillance and the port health services, including public and private health care practitioners, are on alert for any ill persons that have travelled to very high risk areas.

Each province has designated health facilities to manage EVD cases in 11 designated hospitals where personal protective equipment has been placed.

The 11 hospitals are:

- Polokwane in Limpopo;
- Rob Ferreira in Mpumalanga;
- Charlotte Maxeke and Steve Biko in Gauteng;
- Addington in KwaZulu-Natal;
- Klerksdorp in North West;
- Pelonomi in Free State;
- Kimberley in Northern Cape;
- Frere in East London;
- Livingstone in Port Elizabeth;
- Tygerberg in Western Cape.

About 100 registered nurses at the South African Military Health Service have been trained in biosafety level (BSL-4) isolation methods. Aeromedical evacuation teams have also been trained in BSL-4 isolation techniques, and they are able to collect and transport Ebola patients by air using transport isolator and intensive care equipment.

For more, visit: <https://www.bizcommunity.com>