

ICD-10

Ebola - Not just another virus

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Ebola or “hemorrhagic fever” is a highly contagious virus transmitted via contact with body fluids. It was first identified in 1976. It causes its victims to bleed from almost anywhere on their body and approximately 60-90% of those who catch Ebola will die from it. The most troubling aspect of Ebola is that at this time (early Oct 2014), there is no known vaccine or cure.

Since the World Health Organization (WHO) was notified of an outbreak of Ebola virus disease in Guinea, the outbreak has evolved into the largest, most severe, and most complex outbreak in the history of the disease. The three most-affected countries - Guinea, Liberia, and Sierra Leone – face enormous challenges in stopping transmission and providing care for all patients. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), the latest Ebola outbreak has killed over 3,000 people in five West African countries. According to some health officials, the virus has the potential to infect 20,000 by November 2014 and as many as 1.4 million Africans by January 2015.

The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) has activated its Emergency Operations Center (EOC) to help coordinate technical assistance and control activities with partners. The CDC has deployed several teams of public health experts to the West Africa region and plans to send additional public health experts to the affected countries to expand current response activities.

U.S. health officials confirmed the first patient diagnosed with the Ebola in this country on September 30, 2014. The CDC has protocols in place to protect against further spread of the disease. The CDC has issued a Health Alert Notice reminding U.S. health care workers about the importance of taking steps to prevent the spread of this virus, how to test and isolate patients with suspected cases, and how to protect themselves from infection.

For U.S. public health organizations, both locally and nationally, the question is “How is data that is needed for research, reporting, and surveillance captured for Ebola?” It is not very easy. When looking at ICD-9 today, the lack of specificity in the code description makes it difficult to clearly identify Ebola patients in the data. In ICD-9-CM Ebola is classified to:

- **078.89**, *Other specified diseases due to viruses* (confirmed by CDC at the request of AHIMA).

ICD-10-CM provides the ability to capture public health diseases, perform research, measure outcomes, and evaluate the efficacy of treatments as well as facilitate the sharing of data internationally. ICD-10-CM classifies Ebola to:

- **A98.4** *Ebola virus disease*

This rare and exotic disease is an example of our need for ICD-10. In communicating to other health care professionals the reasons “Why Do We Need ICD-10?” our response is “We are

living in a global environment with the fates of nations more and more intertwined. Our ability to track and communicate health data and statistics is of vital importance.”

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