

Outbreak of Ebola Hemorrhagic Fever - Zaire, 1995

On May, 6, 1995 an outbreak of viral hemorrhagic fever due to Ebola virus, in the city of Kikwit, Bandundi region, Zaire was reported to the World Health Organization (WHO) by the national health authorities.

Ebola disease was first recognized in the western equatorial province of the Sudan and the nearby region of Zaire in 1976; a second outbreak occurred in the same area in Sudan in 1979. The reservoir of the virus is unknown and the incubation period is from 2 to 21 days.

As of June 14 a total of 282 cases have been reported, with 222 deaths. The acute phase of this outbreak seems to be over.

The clinical picture is of severe viral illness, usually characterized by sudden onset, with weakness, fever, muscle pain, headache and sore throat, followed by vomiting, diarrhea, rash, limited kidney and liver involvement, and both internal and external bleeding. Ebola infections end in death in 50% to 90% of those clinically ill. No specific treatment or vaccine exists. An international team of experts organized by WHO has been actively collaborating with the government of Zaire to control the outbreak and had prepared a plan of action. The priorities of the plan are to:

- ensure the containment of the epidemic;
- better understand the Ebola virus epidemiology and its clinical manifestations;
- ensure overall administrative, technical and scientific coordination of the International Committee in Kikwit;
- strengthen national response to potentially epidemic diseases..

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