September 10, 2014

Ebola Outbreak in the West African countries of Guinea, Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Nigeria

Many of you are aware of the current outbreak of Ebola (Ebola Virus Disease) in 4 countries in West Africa, specifically Guinea, Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Nigeria. For more information, consult the Centers for Disease Control web page for current information on this changing situation (http://www.cdc.gov/vhf/ebola/outbreaks/guinea/index.html). The maximum incubation period for Ebola is 21 days. So persons who have been to the affected countries in West Africa longer than 21 days ago and have remained healthy are not contagious. Healthy persons without a fever are not contagious.

What UW-River Falls is Doing

Campus has been working with health authorities to follow current recommendations, and we will continue to monitor the situation and follow updated guidelines from health authorities. We are monitoring and following up with students or faculty/staff that may be going to or coming from/returning from areas affected by the Ebola outbreak. The Centers for Disease Control recently released “Advice for Colleges, Universities, and Students about Ebola in West Africa” (http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/page/advice-for-colleges-universities-and-students-about-ebola-in-west-africa).

For Students, Faculty, and Staff Who Have Recently Traveled From West Africa

While campus may be aware of study abroad experiences and international students and scholars who may be visiting or returning from areas affected by the outbreak, we likely would not know about students or faculty/staff that travel independently.

So we are requesting that students, faculty, and staff, who have recently (within the last 21 days) traveled from the affected countries in West Africa (currently Guinea, Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Nigeria), or whose home country is a West African nation, consult with UW-River Falls Student Health Services (715-425-3293) or their local public health department for guidance (for Pierce County, this is Pierce County Public Health Department at 715-273-6755). Currently it is recommended that persons monitor their health for 21 days after they leave West Africa and watch for fever, headaches, and body aches, and that if they become ill, that persons call a health care provider immediately to discuss their symptoms, travel, and potential exposure BEFORE going to a clinic or hospital.

Avoid Travel to Affected Areas

The CDC has issued their highest level of travel warning against any nonessential travel to Guinea, Liberia, and Sierra Leone, including education-related travel, to the affected areas in order to facilitate control of the outbreak and prevent continued spread. A travel alert recommending enhanced precautions has been issued for travelers to Nigeria.

For questions or more information, please monitor the Centers for Disease Control Ebola Outbreak web page above or contact UW-River Falls Student Health Services at 715-425-3293.

Alice Reilly-Myklebust, RN, PhD, Director of Student Health and Counseling Services