

INTRODUCTION

Ebola Virus and Public Health (Part 2)

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The 2014–2015 Ebola virus disease (EVD) epidemic in West Africa appears nearly over. As of August 30th, 2015, the total number of cases is estimated at over 28,000, with 11,305 deaths.¹ Liberia was declared “Ebola free” for a second time on September 3rd, while both Guinea and Sierra Leone are still dealing with sporadic cases.² Although the international response may have been delayed, in the end it was dramatic and effective. The more extreme estimates of mortality from this outbreak were avoided owing to unprecedented collaborations and effort.

It would be a tremendous opportunity lost to put this outbreak behind us now. It is critical that the experiences of this entire epidemic, both positive and negative, from the first misidentified cases until all countries are declared Ebola free, are thoroughly and objectively analyzed. This is the only way that “Lessons Learned” can be incorporated into our disease surveillance, identification, and response processes. The International Health Regulations and the Global Health Security Agenda demand that we take full advantage of the suffering and lives lost over the past 2 years to do better in the future.

Disaster Medicine and Public Health Preparedness took several novel actions to support the international response to EVD. Electronically publishing articles on EVD as soon as they were reviewed and approved, as well as providing free, open access to policy makers, planners, and responders, was a sincere effort to limit the impact of the disease. As volunteer editors for this Special Section on Ebola, we will continue to review the manuscripts submitted and applaud the commitment of DMPHP and Cambridge Publishing to provide the eventual Special Issue for the public good.

About the Authors

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1. Ebola situation reports. World Health Organization website. <http://who.int/ebola/ebola-situation-reports>. Accessed September 5, 2015.
2. Dosso Z. Liberia declared free of Ebola spread – again: WHO. Yahoo!News website. <http://news.yahoo.com/liberia-declared-free-ebola-again-07381>. Published September 4, 2015. Accessed September 5, 2015.