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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Health Providers Prepare for Possible Ebola Case

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has confirmed through laboratory testing that the first case of Ebola Viral Disease has been diagnosed in the United States. In response to this case in Dallas and the developments in Africa over the last several months, the Santa Barbara County Public Health Department (SBC PHD) has been following the Ebola situation very closely and is in regular communication with and receiving updates from the CDC and California Department of Public Health. SBC PHD has been planning with local healthcare providers to prepare for a person who presents with clinical signs and who has a history of travel in West Africa or contact with another person known to have Ebola. While the situation requires extensive preparation, there is no reason to believe that there will be widespread Ebola transmission in the United States.

Here are some examples of specific ways that SBC PHD and partner agencies are preparing for Ebola Viral Disease:

- Coordination with hospitals on Ebola preparedness and a Provider Alert was issued to health care providers in August 2014, with another update this week, regarding Ebola symptoms, criteria for being considered a “suspect case”, testing and reporting protocols.
- Infectious Disease Emergency Response practice drill on Ebola will be led by public health in November, with hospitals and government agencies participating
- Public Health Laboratory is now trained and authorized to package and ship Ebola patient specimens to the CDC
- Public Health Laboratory issued guidance for all hospital labs within Santa Barbara County regarding handling and processing of Ebola specimens
- Collaboration with the Santa Barbara Airport to finalize a protocol for potentially ill passengers who are identified upon arrival by airplane
- Collaboration with EMS/ 911 dispatch to prepare first responders for medical transportation of Ebola suspects and use of Personal Protective Equipment
- Ongoing communication with the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) about preparations for hospitals and health care providers

Ebola is not being spread from person to person in the United States and it is not likely in the future. The strong infrastructure of public health and the health care system in the U.S. would quickly stop transmission of Ebola, just as it stops transmission of many other communicable diseases. One of the core functions of public health in the U.S. is to isolate or quarantine potentially infectious persons and this strategic approach is currently being used in Texas. We are absolutely confident that Ebola will not gain a stronghold in the U.S.

Local Santa Barbara County healthcare providers who have an ill patient that meets defined criteria outlined by the Public Health Department have been advised to contact the Health Officer immediately for consultation and coordination.

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