

MSC Electives Council guidance for medical students v. 1.0 (30.10.14)

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Introduction

Ebola Virus is one of a group of viruses called viral haemorrhagic fevers (VHFs) which are severe and life-threatening viral diseases that have been reported in parts of Africa, South America, the Middle East and Eastern Europe.

Ebola Virus Disease (EVD) is a severe life-threatening illness with a high case fatality rate. There has been an unprecedented outbreak first declared in March 2014 in Guinea, Liberia & Sierra Leone.

It is likely that this outbreak is going to last well into 2015 or longer.

Transmission occurs through direct contact with bodily fluids or contaminated environment (ie. blood, fomites, faeces, saliva, urine, sweat, semen) from symptomatic patients suffering with EVD or handling tissues/bodily fluids of patients with EVD or handling dead bodies.

As this situation changes one needs to get regular updates for instance via

WHO: <http://who.int/csr/disease/ebola/situation-reports/en/>

CDC: <http://www.cdc.gov/vhf/ebola/index.html>

Medical Student electives and EVD

UK Medical schools have a responsibility to ensure safety of UK medical students during their elective period as much as possible. In accordance with FCO guidance, PHE guidance and in common with WHO and other international organisations there should be **no** travel to **Guinea, Sierra Leone or Liberia** unless within a organised medical or other health organisation.

Until further notice Medical Electives to **Guinea, Sierra Leone and Liberia** will therefore **not be granted**.

Students applying to work with voluntary or health organisations will not be allowed during term time to do so and will have to follow strictly PHE guidance on returning back to UK with regards to monitoring purposes as indicated below.

Any student/staff returning from one of those 3 countries, or who had any exposure to EVD patients needs to adhere to the following guidance from the PHE and universities need to ensure they have implemented such guidance into their practice (ie monitoring for 21 days).

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/365601/Ebola_advice_for_further_educational_establishments_211014.pdf

Students applying for electives in neighbouring countries (Guinea-Bissau, Senegal, Mali, Cote d'Ivoire) need to make very careful risk assessments before being granted. Risk assessments need to include measures on risk reduction including the following:

- Have careful risk assessment and prior confirmation of low risk from supervisor
- Avoid any contact with blood or bodily fluids of a patient or a corpse and possibly contaminated objects.
- Wash hands regularly, using soap or antiseptics.
- Avoid contact with wild animals, alive or dead; do not consume 'bushmeat'.
- Avoid habitats which might be populated by bats, such as caves, isolated shelters, or mining sites.
- Avoid having unprotected sexual intercourse.

Students applying for electives to other West African countries need to ensure they will make a careful risk assessment which requires agreement by the electives convenor/committee.

Students who wish to apply for electives in **other areas where there have been reported VHF outbreaks** (ie Uganda, DR Congo) need to make a careful assessment and will not be allowed to spend their time within such an outbreak area. However in those countries the risks are otherwise low and electives will be granted subject to satisfactory risk assessment.

Students applying to work in departments who look after Ebola patients (ie specialised hospitals like Emory, Atlanta) need to have a risk assessment carried out which ensures that they have no risk of exposure to Ebola or adhere to the strictest infection control measure safeguarding medical students. Students too must ensure that they adhere strictly to those local policies without exceptions. Prior confirmation of adherence to those measures from their supervisor is mandatory.

MSC Electives committee October 2014 MLS