
To:	General Practices, Pharmacists, After-Hours Centres and Emergency Departments in the greater Wellington and Wairarapa regions
From:	Dr Jill McKenzie, Medical Officer of Health
Date:	19 July 2019
Title:	National Health Advisory: Notification of Ebola Update

NOTIFICATION OF EBOLA UPDATE: WHO DETERMINES A PUBLIC HEALTH EMERGENCY OF INTERNATIONAL CONCERN

On 17 July 2019 the Director-General of the World Health Organization (WHO) determined that the ongoing Ebola epidemic in the Democratic Republic of Congo is a Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC) under the International Health Regulations 2005 (IHR).

To date, there have been over 2500 confirmed or probable cases of Ebola resulting in over 1600 deaths since the outbreak began in August 2018. The outbreak is predominantly affecting two provinces in the DRC, North Kivu and Ituri.

For New Zealand, no action is required. The World Health Organization has made recommendations for countries that are not directly affected and do not neighbour an affected country. These are very clear:

- No country should close its borders or place any restrictions on travel and trade. Such measures are usually implemented out of fear and have no basis in science. They push the movement of people and goods to informal border crossings that are not monitored, thus increasing the chances of the spread of disease. Most critically, these restrictions can also compromise local economies and negatively affect response operations from a security and logistics perspective.
- National authorities should work with airlines and other transport and tourism industries to ensure that they do not exceed WHO's advice on international traffic.
- The Committee does not consider entry screening at airports or other ports of entry outside the region to be necessary.

The World Health Organization has made a number of recommendations for affected countries and their neighbouring countries, relating to their operational responses (eg, vaccination, infection prevention, screening), surveillance, community engagement, and communications.

NGOs and/or **DHBs** that currently have programmes in these areas or are aware of staff intending to travel to affected regions will need to ensure that the necessary safety protocols are in place for those returning.

We will inform you if the situation changes.