



Dallas Physicians Support Facts Over Fear: Don't Quarantine Healthcare Workers Who Care For Ebola Patients

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE — November 5, 2014

DALLAS — Since the beginning of the crisis, Dallas County Medical Society physicians have been heavily involved in the ongoing Ebola situation in Dallas County and the nation at large. Today, physicians of DCMS' Infection Prevention and Control & Antimicrobial Stewardship Committee sent the following letter to local, state and national leaders urging them not to consider mandatory quarantines for healthcare workers due to fears about Ebola.

Dear Representative/Senator _____,

We are medical doctors with specific training and experience in healthcare epidemiology and infectious diseases. We represent a standing committee at the Dallas County Medical Society that strives for continued advancement and congruency of infection prevention and control practices in our community during routine conditions and conditions of emerging infectious diseases (e.g., pandemic and seasonal influenza, antimicrobial resistant bacteria, Ebola).

All of our education, medical training and current practices focus on understanding, preventing and controlling infectious diseases. Our top priority is optimizing patient safety by 1) ensuring that the risk of a patient inadvertently acquiring a healthcare-associated infection is reduced to an absolute minimum; 2) preventing potential infectious disease outbreaks; and 3) promptly controlling any outbreak that does occur. Our passion is improving patient outcomes and protecting the healthcare personnel who are providing patient care. Based on our training, we can say with confidence that strong scientific evidence gathered from past outbreaks and the 2014 experience in the United States supports the fact that Ebola is not transmitted by individuals who do not have symptoms of Ebola.

As a result, we applaud the recommendations of the Texas Task Force on Infectious Disease Preparedness and Response that do not support government-imposed strict quarantine for cooperative asymptomatic healthcare personnel (HCP) who have provided care for patients with Ebola Virus Disease (EVD). Supporting the quarantine of such HCP, rather than relying on demonstrated scientific fact to guide political action, would sow seeds of misinformation, leading to panic. Support of mandatory quarantine of asymptomatic persons sends a message that may lead to fewer volunteers and increased difficulty in assembling competent care teams in West Africa and in other countries, including the United States, to care safely for EVD patients. We encourage you to support the active monitoring (twice daily monitoring for fever and other symptoms of EVD) of all HCP providing care for EVD patients, including those returning from Ebola outbreak areas in West Africa. Any actions stronger than this, such as quarantines, toward asymptomatic persons are extremely detrimental in controlling the spread of EVD in Western Africa, which is critical for preventing Ebola cases in the United States. Our collective focus must be on efforts to recruit volunteers who are trained in infection prevention and control.



We hope you will take the time to read the thoughtful statements prepared by the Society for Healthcare Epidemiology of America, Association of Infection Preventionists and Epidemiology, and Infectious Disease Society of America — US medical societies that represent thousands of professionals voicing their opposition to quarantine of asymptomatic persons. Furthermore, the US Centers for Disease Control and Preventions' updated guidance details the appropriate Ebola monitoring and movement of contacts and supports the aforementioned statements.

We continue to stand ready to work with our local, state and federal officials to stop the spread of this disease. If you have any questions, please contact us.

Sincerely,

Dallas County Medical Society
Infection Prevention and Control & Antimicrobial Stewardship Committee

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About DCMS: The Dallas County Medical Society unites and empowers physicians to support the health of all residents in the metropolitan region. DCMS is a professional organization of approximately 7,100 local physicians, medical students and residents dedicated to serving Dallas-area patients, making it the second-largest county medical society in the United States. DCMS physicians have compiled a list of answers to Frequently Asked Questions about Ebola, available at www.dallas-cms.org/community_health/ebola.cfm.

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