

Dallas Physicians: Don't Close Schools Because of Ebola Fears

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE — October 17, 2014

DALLAS — For the past three weeks, Dallas County Medical Society physicians have been heavily involved in the ongoing Ebola crisis in Dallas County. Today, physicians of DCMS' Community Emergency Response Committee sent the following letter to North Texas school officials urging them not to consider closing schools due to fears about Ebola.

To Dallas Area School Officials:

The Dallas County Medical Society represents more than 7,000 physicians in Dallas County. Our physician leaders have responded to this Ebola crisis by providing credible information to the community based on scientific evidence in order to alleviate the understandable concerns and fears regarding Ebola. We know the Ebola crisis is of great concern for you, school district employees, students, and parents. We all must do our part as community leaders to promote actions that are based on scientific evidence for how to respond appropriately to a troubling situation.

As parents ourselves, we understand the concern that parents have for the safety of their children. We believe that responsible action — coupled with solid facts — can be the most effective way to assuage those concerns.

Scientific evidence shows NO risk of Ebola transmission unless an infected person is showing signs or symptoms of illness. The virus is transmitted only through the blood and bodily fluids of someone who is sick from Ebola. Further, such fluids would have to pass through either a break in another person's skin or contact with mucous membranes (eyes, mouth and nose). We encourage you to share the attached educational flyer with school officials, teachers, students, and parents.

In that vein, we provide the following recommendations and information, based on available scientific evidence:

- **We do not recommend school closures** at this time. Keeping all schools open, including schools that have children of parents who are being monitored, presents no risk to students or teachers and sends an important message of allaying fears in the community.
- As you know, public health officials in Dallas are monitoring several groups of people who have been in contact with people with Ebola. The children of asymptomatic contacts present **absolutely no** risk to others. This includes children of healthcare workers from Presbyterian Hospital and children of parents who are being monitored as a result of recent airline travel. **We do not recommend keeping these children out of schools. Contacts of contacts present no risk.**
- **There is no evidence to support “deep cleaning” or similar actions for schools** or school buses related to the current Ebola situation. Such measures also would send the wrong message about the risk of contracting the disease.
- School nurse clinics should continue to monitor children for standard childhood illnesses. Because this is the beginning of the influenza season, it is important for school nurses to have standard personal protective equipment (PPE) including gloves, masks and gowns available. **PPE equipment above what is currently standard for school nurses is not recommended.**
- The most constructive action at present is to get **all school children and staff vaccinated with annual flu shots** to head off an influenza epidemic during this period of concern over Ebola.

Since the current Ebola crisis began, Dallas County Medical Society members have responded by providing the community with credible information based on scientific evidence. One of our primary goals has been to alleviate the groundless, though understandable, concerns and fears regarding Ebola. We have assembled area physician experts to respond to questions in multiple ways, including a town hall meeting, speaking engagements with community leaders and civic organizations, social media, and news media interviews.

To that end, DCMS and the Texas Medical Association have prepared [an informational flyer](#) for you to use in educating your staff, parents, and students. We are also ready to provide knowledgeable physicians to visit your campuses to answer questions and present scientific information. If you would find this helpful, please call 214.948.3622.

We encourage you to stay informed as this situation unfolds. As school officials, you play an important role in communicating the truth regarding the risk of Ebola transmission, which should be based on scientific evidence. Your actions and practices either can inspire public confidence or contribute to fear. We plead for you to act in a manner or institute practices that have a scientific basis. We remain ready to assist you in any way possible through this difficult situation, and we are resolved to continue our efforts of promoting the truth about the transmission risk of Ebola.

Sincerely,

John T. Carlo, MD, Chair, DCMS Community Emergency Response Committee

Mark A. Casanova, MD
Wendy M. Chung, MD
Cristie Columbus, MD
Robert L. Fine, MD
Ray L. Fowler, MD
Edward L. Goodman, MD
H. Gordon Green, MD
Robert W. Haley, MD
Sarah L. Helfand, MD
S. Marshal Isaacs, MD

Stephen A. Landers, MD
James P. Luby, MD
Mark S. Mlcak, MD
Carol S. North, MD
Paul E. Pepe, MD
Don R. Read, MD
Jane D. Siegel, MD
Richard W. Snyder II, MD
Thomas M. Zellers, MD

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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.

Contact:

Steven Harrell, Dallas County Medical Society director of communications
steven@dallas-cms.org // 214.948.3622