To our campus community:

The recent cases of Ebola Virus in the United States have led to some questions about the University of Arizona's plan in the unlikely event of an Ebola case on campus. We want to assure you that the University, particularly the Campus Health Service and the UA Medical Center, is monitoring the situation and has protocols in place to ensure the safety and well-being of our campus community. We also want to make sure that you have accurate information about the virus.

Since the Ebola outbreak began in West Africa, there have been four confirmed cases of the virus in the United States – in Texas and New York. Of those four patients, three have recovered and one has died. As we have seen, those at the greatest risk for contracting the virus include health-care workers or family caregivers with prolonged close contact with severely ill Ebola patients. Ebola can only be spread by direct contact with blood or body fluids; it is not spread through air, water or food.

Here at the UA, medical professionals are well-prepared to handle possible Ebola cases. The UA Medical Center has a detailed protocol in place to protect its health-care workers and stop the spread of virus. You can read more about the protocol in this Arizona Daily Star interview with UA infectious disease expert Dr. Sean Elliot. In addition, the UA has an adaptable pandemic response plan that was tested during the 2009 H1N1 pandemic and can be reactivated if needed, under our Campus Emergency Response Team.

You should know that your risk of contracting Ebola is very low. Still, we urge you to be aware of the symptoms, particularly as we head into the height of flu season. This chart will help you identify the difference between Ebola and flu. Given that flu is responsible for anywhere from 3,000 to 50,000 deaths in the U.S. every year, we also urge you to take good care of your general health by getting adequate sleep, nutrition and exercise; regularly washing your hands or using an alcohol based hand sanitizer; and getting a flu shot.

If you want to learn more about Ebola Virus and its signs, symptoms and statistics, the CDC website is a valuable resource. Information also is available on the Campus Health Service website.

Please be well.

Dr. Harry McDermott
Executive Director, Campus Health Service

Life & Work Connections