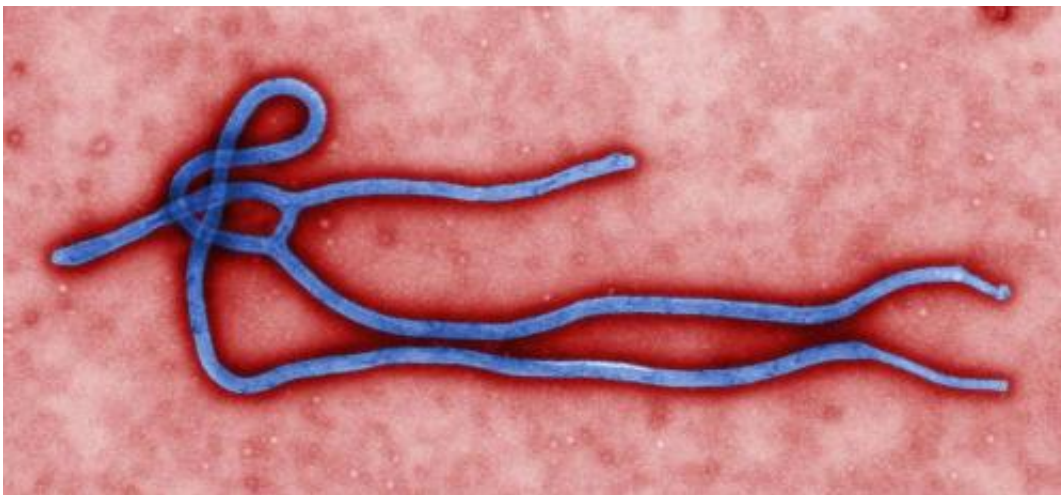


Poll finds many in US lack knowledge about Ebola and its transmission

August 22 2014



Ebola virus virion. Credit: CDC

Although the Centers for Disease and Prevention (CDC) reports no known cases of Ebola transmission in the United States, a Harvard School of Public Health (HSPH)/SSRS poll released today (August 21, 2014) shows that four in ten (39%) adults in the U.S. are concerned that there will be a large outbreak in the U.S., and a quarter (26%) are concerned that they or someone in their immediate family may get sick with Ebola over the next year.

The nationally representative poll of 1,025 adults was conducted August 13-17, 2014 by researchers at HSPH and SSRS, an independent research

company. The margin of error for total respondents is +/-3.6 percentage points at the 95% confidence level.

Ebola hemorrhagic fever is a severe, often fatal [disease](#) in humans and nonhuman primates, such as monkeys, gorillas and chimpanzees. Four countries have reported infections: Guinea, Liberia, Nigeria, and Sierra Leone. Officials report 1,350 have died as of August 21, 2014 and over 2,473 people have been infected since March 2014. For an update on the outbreak, see this CDC link:

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

The HSPH/SSRS poll found people with less education are more likely to be concerned about an outbreak in the U.S. (less than high school 50% vs. some college 36% vs. college grad or more 24%). People with less education are also more concerned they or their family will get sick with Ebola (less than high school 37% vs. some college 22% vs. college grad or more 14%). Perhaps related, those with less education are also less likely to be following the news about the Ebola outbreak in West Africa closely (total 63%; less than [high school](#) 57% and some college 62% vs. college grad or more 73%).

Two-thirds of people (68%) surveyed believe Ebola spreads "easily" ("very easily" or "somewhat easily") from those who are sick with it. This perception may contrast with CDC, World Health Organization (WHO), and other health experts who note that Ebola is not an airborne illness, and is transmitted through direct contact with infected bodily fluids, infected objects, or infected animals. For more on how Ebola is transmitted: <http://www.cdc.gov/vhf/ebola/transmission/index.html>

A third of those polled (33%) believe there is "an effective medicine to treat people who have gotten sick with Ebola." According to the CDC and WHO, there is no proven anti-viral medicine, however, treating symptoms – such as maintaining fluids, oxygen levels, and blood

pressure – can increase the odds of survival. To date, the media reports two people infected with Ebola overseas have been treated in the U.S.

"Many people are concerned about a large scale outbreak of Ebola occurring in the U.S.," said Gillian SteelFisher, PhD, deputy director of the Harvard Opinion Research Program and research scientist in the HSPH Department of Health Policy and Management. "As they report on events related to Ebola, the media and [public health](#) officials need to better inform Americans of Ebola and how it is spread."

More information: For more information about the disease, see the CDC's Questions and Answers about Ebola:

www.cdc.gov/vhf/ebola/outbreaks/guinea/qa.html

WHO information: www.who.int/csr/disease/ebola/en/

Provided by Harvard School of Public Health

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