

January 8, 2015 CDC Ebola Response Update

[Announcer] This program is presented by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

[Larry Thomas] 2,700 people have been infected with Ebola in Guinea as of January 2. About 150 of these are healthcare workers, half of whom have died. Heidi Soeters and Lindsey Horton are CDC scientists who recently spent five weeks training healthcare workers in Guinea on infection control.

[Heidi Soeters] When thinking about infection control in Guinea, I think it's very helpful to picture the average health facility which just has one to two rooms, it doesn't have electricity or running water, there are a lot of people crowded around which creates a lot of problems for infection control.

[Lindsey Horton] Our infection control program included training of frontline healthcare workers. This training included everyone from doctors and nurses to cleaners and ambulance drivers and anyone working in a health facility or with potential patient contact. The training included practical hands on exercises in hand washing, triage of patients, using protective equipment, cleaning, and disinfection, as well as traditional classroom training on basics of infection control practices.

[Larry Thomas] The course was unusual because it targeted healthcare workers in facilities other than Ebola Treatment Units. Heidi explains.

[Heidi Soeters] Healthcare workers in Ebola Treatment Units have already received a lot of training, and when a patient walks in their door as a suspected Ebola case, they are much more prepared to handle that situation. Whereas healthcare workers in smaller health facilities, when they receive a patient walking in the door, that patient could be there to deliver a child, it could be an infant who needs to receive a vaccination, or it could be a patient with suspected Ebola. So they really need a lot of information and knowledge to be prepared to protect themselves and other patients from Ebola or any other type of infectious disease risk.

[Larry Thomas] Heidi and Lindsey served as technical advisors for the training sponsor, Catholic Relief Services. Lindsey says many more healthcare workers than they expected wanted the training.

[Lindsey Horton] On the first day of the course we had 80 students enrolled and over 200 showed up eager to be trained and begging to have a spot in the course. We were fortunately able to add additional sessions and have trained close to 2,000 people at this point.

[Larry Thomas] The training course also certified infection control specialists who would oversee infection control in hospitals and clinics.

[Heidi Soeters] These efforts have the added benefit of being important, not just in the context of an Ebola epidemic, but also, hopefully, to create lasting improvements in infection control that would last for the years to come.

[Announcer] For the most accurate health information, visit www.cdc.gov or call 1-800-CDC-INFO.