

Government committee meets to discuss Ebola



With the world watching West Africa, and the incidence of cases in the US and in Spain, it is clear that the matter of Ebola is not one which any country in the world can ignore. Health experts across the globe are concerned about the disease, and at present there appears to be no known cure.

In the USA Thomas Eric Duncan who lived in Texas died in hospital earlier today. He had travelled from Liberia last month. The USA appears to be screening passengers from West Africa at some airports. In Spain a nurse who treated two patients with Ebola at a hospital in Madrid is herself now being treated for the disease.

The Scottish Government Resilience Committee (SGoRR) met this evening to discuss preparedness related to the Ebola situation in West Africa.

The meeting was chaired by First Minister Alex Salmond who said:

“It is crucial our health service is geared up to deal with any potential confirmed cases of Ebola in Scotland.

“That was the basis of the meeting and I am confident our NHS is ready to respond. But we must not only assess our preparedness in Scotland, we must also ensure we are doing all we can to support the efforts to contain the spread of Ebola in West Africa. I have asked for an urgent assessment of what we can do to build on the £500,000 we have already provided to the World Health Organisation and Scotland will do whatever we can to assist.”

Health Secretary Alex Neil was also part of the meeting, along with experts in infectious diseases from Health Protection Scotland and acting Chief Medical Officer (CMO) Aileen Keel.

Mr Neil said:

“Our public health experts, including those at Health Protection Scotland, have been monitoring the position very closely since the outbreak began and putting in place the awareness and advice to ensure our health service is as well prepared as possible to respond.

“While the risk remains relatively low, we are ensuring that we have the robust procedures in place to identify cases rapidly. Our health service also has the expertise and facilities to ensure that confirmed Ebola cases would be contained and isolated effectively minimising any potential spread of the disease.

“Indeed, the CMO has written to clinicians across our NHS today to reinforce the need to be vigilant and take the appropriate steps in any suspected or high risk cases.

“Scotland’s NHS has proved it is well able to cope with infectious diseases in the past, such as swine flu, and I am confident we will be able to respond effectively again.

“We will go on monitoring the situation and maintain a high state of vigilance across our health system. SGoRR will meet again in the coming days to continue to closely monitor developments and ensure robust resilience arrangements are in place.”