

Barton prepped for Ebola patients

By Vicki McKenna

Barton Health is committed to the safety of our patients, visitors, staff, and physicians. After receiving several confirmed cases of the Ebola virus disease in the United States, Barton Health is prepared to care for and respond to suspected Ebola cases.

Though the Ebola virus has not reached California or Nevada and the risk is currently low, we take the threat very seriously. An Ebola virus disease workgroup comprised of Barton Health leaders and staff has been formed and we have developed an Ebola preparedness plan. By collaborating with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, El Dorado County Public Health, and other health agencies across the nation, Barton Health will be able to deliver the most up-to-date information and most effective action plan to combat the virus.

Barton Memorial Hospital currently follows the CDC's recommendations for hospital infection control to safely manage and isolate a patient with Ebola or other highly infectious disease. Should it become necessary, Barton Health staff and physicians are prepared to care for possible Ebola patients and protect the community at large.

As described by a Centers for Disease Control official, the information about Ebola is changing "daily and rapidly." To keep our patients, visitors, and community safe, Barton Health is taking actions should a suspected Ebola patient arrive. Actions include additional screening about travel history, isolation precautions and procedures, and ongoing education and training.

Travel history screening

As an additional precaution, patients who enter the Barton Health inpatient and outpatient offices will be asked about their travel history. If you or someone you know has traveled to a high-risk country in Africa within the last 21 days or has been exposed to someone who has, the second step is to monitor for Ebola's signs and symptoms. Ebola resembles the flu and signs and symptoms may include a high fever, stomach ache, headache, vomiting, diarrhea, weakness, muscle aches, and unexplained bleeding. Ebola can only be spread by an infected patient if signs and symptoms are present.

Isolation precautions and procedures

For suspected Ebola patients, Barton Health has prepared isolation rooms and procedures to protect Barton Health patients, visitors, staff, and physicians. In addition, appropriate protective equipment and disposal methods are in place.

Education and training

Barton's Emergency Management Services has implemented practice drills and walk-throughs to prepare for a real case scenario, should it arise. Ongoing education and training is also being conducted for clinical and non-clinical staff.

We encourage all members of the community to stay informed. Visit the Centers for Disease Control website for an Ebola checklist and the most updated information.

Vicki McKenna is an infection preventionist with Barton Health.