Entering the Red Zone: Establishing a Specialized Medical Team for Ebola Preparedness

Jaime O’Donnell, MSN, RN, CCRN, RNC-NIC, Brandy Pockrus, BSN, RN, & Sethe Wetter, ADN, RN
The Medical University of South Carolina

INTRODUCTION

Once believed to be contained to a tropical area in Africa, medical care for a patient with the Ebola Disease Virus (EDV) remained isolated to the areas affected by this horrific disease. An increase in travel capability to the affected areas has allowed EDV to spread to the western hemisphere creating an urgent need for training and preparation of healthcare workers. Lack of knowledge and proactive education about the disease has fostered both fear and anxiety. A specialized training program for EDV preparedness is essential to safely prepare healthcare workers for screening and patient care in order to prevent a global health crisis.

DESIGN

An Interdisciplinary Specialized Medical Team (SMT) consisting of pre-hospital staff, registered nurses, respiratory therapists, and physicians (N=31) was established. Specialized training using guidelines and protocols for the unit and care of the EDV patient were developed based on recommendations from the CDC and documented EDV case studies.

METHODS

Members of the Specialized Medical Team (SMT) underwent an intense three day training program which included a didactic review of disease specifics, coordinated practice with protocols, and interdisciplinary high fidelity scenarios that simulated EDV patient care and containment while donned in personal protective equipment (PPE).

RESULTS

Successful transfer of knowledge was demonstrated using a standard pre and post test. Compliance to protocols and unit guidelines during simulations was measured using a specific tool. “Glow germ” was sprinkled through all patient simulation scenarios. All team members were then measured after doffing PPE via black light to detect any possible “glow germ” transmission during the exercise and demonstrated 100% compliance.

CONCLUSIONS

The establishment of an interdisciplinary Specialized Medical Team (SMT) and training program was essential to prepare designated healthcare personnel in the care and containment of the Ebola Disease Virus (EDV). All team members demonstrated successful knowledge transfer and adherence to SMT patient protocols while donned in protective equipment without contamination.

IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

Any healthcare facility preparing to care for an Ebola patient should establish an Interdisciplinary Specialized Medical Team (SMT) using advance training and practice methods. Meticulous adherence to policy is essential to the safety of all team members. SMT training should be done proactively and include a method for validating competency.

REFERENCES


