



Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-0536

October 15, 2014

C. Duane Dauner
President and Chief Executive Officer
California Hospital Association
1215 K Street, Suite 800
Sacramento, CA 95814

Erica Murray
President and Chief Executive Officer
California Association of Public Hospitals and Health Systems
70 Washington Street, Suite 215
Oakland, CA 94607

Dear Mr. Dauner and Ms. Murray,

As you are aware, this month the first case of Ebola was diagnosed in the United States. According to news reports, there was a communications breakdown between health providers who learned that the patient had recently travelled from West Africa and the care team who ultimately sent the patient home without considering Ebola as a possible diagnosis. Worse yet, this week two health care professionals developed the first cases of Ebola contracted on United States soil, despite protections in place for health care workers. We know that you and your member hospitals share our commitment to protecting Californians from this threat to public health.

While state and federal health officials have not determined conclusively how the infections occurred, it is clear that the precautions taken to protect health care workers from Ebola must be re-examined. All appropriate steps must be taken to ensure that these dangerous lapses do not happen again.

We are writing to help ensure that California hospitals are fully prepared should an Ebola patient walk through their doors. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has made multiple efforts to educate hospitals about how to screen for Ebola and how to properly isolate and treat patients who are either suspected of having the disease or who have been diagnosed with it. It is critical that this information is widely disseminated and that every hospital is taking action to ensure its staff is fully prepared.


We ask that you communicate with your members regarding the following questions and send us a response within one week:


- Do hospital administrators feel they have received complete information from the CDC and have federal authorities been responsive to their questions and concerns?
- Have the hospitals encountered any problems with implementing CDC guidance?
- Do hospitals have a protocol in place to immediately screen patients for fever and place them in separate waiting areas until further screening can be done?
- Have the hospitals communicated protocols, checklists, and other tools to all levels of their health care staff?
- Do they feel that every member of their staff, from an intake staffer on up, understands that it is crucial to pass on critical information to all of their colleagues – including information on a patient’s recent travel and activities?
- What communication and training has happened between California hospitals and local health clinics, urgent care centers, and physician offices to ensure that all front line health workers follow appropriate protocol to prevent another patient from mistakenly being sent home or treated in a way that puts others at risk?
- Do the hospitals have adequate supplies of Hazmat suits and other personal protective equipment? Do they have properly equipped isolation rooms to assure patient, visitor, and staff safety? And do they have proper procedures for disposal of medical waste and linens after use?

We are confident that the U.S. health system can and will respond appropriately to contain Ebola as long as providers are properly prepared to do so. The purpose of this letter is to make sure that California hospitals are 100 percent up to date to keep Californians safe from the threat of this deadly disease.

Thank you for your assistance and for your commitment to protecting Californians. We look forward to your urgent and timely response.

Sincerely,


 RAUL RUIZ, M.D.
 Member of Congress


 AMI BERA, M.D.
 Member of Congress


 JARED HUFFMAN
 Member of Congress


 JANICE HAHN
 Member of Congress

Julia Brownley

REP. JULIA BROWNLEY

Tony Cardenas

REP. TONY CARDENAS

Sam Farr

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