



Guidelines for Medical Clearance of Ebola Caregivers



The American College of Occupational and Environmental Medicine (ACOEM) has issued new guidelines aimed at strengthening procedures for the medical clearance of designated Ebola caregivers in the nation's hospitals. "These guidelines provide a tool that hospitals can quickly turn to, should we face new cases of Ebola patients being treated in the U.S. in the future," says ACOEM President Kathryn Mueller, MD.

"Guidelines for the Medical Clearance of Designated Ebola Caregivers in U.S. Hospitals", which is available at ACOEM's website (www.acoem.org), provides a nine-point list of conditions in which assessment by a trained occupational medicine physician may be necessary for determining the readiness and suitability of healthcare workers for Ebola caregiving. While initial screening may be conducted by an appropriately trained nurse or physician assistant, referral to an occupational medicine physician is indicated in some circumstances.

ACOEM's guidelines also provide a step-by-step safety-check procedure for healthcare workers who use personal protective equipment in the course of treating Ebola patients, as well as other tools for ensuring caregiver safety.

"After our recent experience with treatment of Ebola patients in the United States it is clear that U.S. hospitals need to be especially vigilant in equipping and preparing caregivers who deal with this highly contagious disease," Dr. Mueller points out.

The new guidelines suggest that hospitals thoroughly assess healthcare workers before they are assigned to treat Ebola patients in order to determine their ability to comply with Ebola-care protocols, utilizing occupational medical professionals when appropriate to help with the assessments. For example, Ebola caregivers must be able to comply with direct active monitoring throughout a care assignment. Caregivers also need to be aware that in the event of high-risk exposure, additional restrictions on movement and travel could apply.

In addition, the suitability of Ebola caregivers to tolerate or safely put on and remove personal protective equipment is extremely important and should be taken into account before care begins. ACOEM's guidelines include a step-by-step health-and-safety check for ensuring that caregivers are able to safely don and doff such protective gear when caring for Ebola patients.

A checklist of personal and medical conditions that should be taken into account when determining suitability for Ebola caregiving, is also found in ACOEM's guidelines. These can range from having musculoskeletal conditions that interfere with donning and doffing personal protective equipment to personal factors, such as having travel plans that could interfere with monitoring or movement restrictions.

"The crisis of last fall has subsided, but the threat to healthcare workers remains real," Dr. Mueller notes. "This is the time for hospitals to carefully review their process to ensure they will not be caught unprepared."

Source: [American College of Occupational and Environmental Medicine \(ACOEM\)](#)

Image Credit: ACOEM

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