

## Preparedness for Ebola Virus Disease

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The outbreak of Ebola Virus Disease (EVD) expanded fiercely in West African Countries during 2014. On October 24th, Japan Medical Association (JMA) President Yoshitake Yokokura, along with members of the Executive Board Dr. Takashi Komori and Dr. Masami Ishii, visited the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare (MHLW), and met with Minister Yasuhisa Shiozaki. During that meeting, they agreed to collaborate to prepare for the occurrence of cases of EVD inside Japan in the near future.

This meeting was held following a strong request from Minister Shiozaki. On that day, Mr. Shiozaki mentioned “It is mandatory for Japanese citizens, administration, and medical associations to collaborate to prevent an EVD outbreak in Japan.” He also said “The MHLW makes a maximum effort to enhance the quarantine; however, if an EVD suspicious patient visits a clinic occasionally, the doctor is requested to ask about travel history to Western Africa, and then inform the health center as quickly as possible. This policy should be distributed to all JMA members.”

Dr. Yokokura replied that the JMA had updated the situation regarding EVD to all members through the JMA website, providing information to citizens, etc. He also mentioned “We experienced Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) in 2003 and swine influenza in 2009. We will also work for EVD together with the MHLW at this time.”

Additionally, Dr. Yokokura described that EVD is not an airborne disease, but is rather a blood-borne disease, spread by contagion, and

emphasized that Japanese citizens should be informed appropriately. He also pointed out “If the outbreak is spread more widely in the world, the possibility of contact infection in the airport will occur, and the primary target should be widen, not only focusing on people with a travel history to Western Africa.”

Dr. Ishii also reported that the World Medical Association (WMA) Council Resolution on Ebola Viral Disease was adopted by the 198th WMA Council Session, Durban, October 2014.<sup>1</sup> The WMA General Assembly adopted the WMA Resolution on Unproven Therapy and the Ebola Virus at the same time.\*<sup>1</sup> Additionally, Dr. Komori spoke with the Minister about the donation of supplies such as personal protective equipment, and infection screening kits.

So far, not a single patient with EVD had yet been reported inside Japan; however, Japanese citizens working abroad are always faced with the risk of EVD infection. Considering the situation of the EVD epidemic in Japan, and infections among Japanese people working abroad including those in the overseas diplomatic establishment, business, Japan Self Defense Forces, and media, Favipiravir (Avigan), a novel viral RNA polymerase inhibitor which is effective against EVD, should be stocked in advance.

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### Reference

1. Nagata T, Lefor AK, Hasegawa M, Ishii M. Favipiravir: a new medication for the Ebola virus disease pandemic. *Disaster Med Public Health Prep.* 2015;9:79-81.

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\*1 See the following pages for the WMA Resolutions. The Resolution on Ebola Viral Disease was initially adopted as an emergency resolution by the WMA Council and adopted by the General Assembly later.

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