

# Letter to the Editor: The Pundit Speaks

By Randolph M. Howes, M.D., Ph.D.

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## “Ebola Is One Big Deadly Question Mark”

The World Health Organization (WHO) says the Ebola virus epidemic is out of control, while America's Center for Disease Control (CDC) continues to reassure all that they have the knowledge and expertise to contain the virus and successfully care for its victims. Is this the same CDC which just last week made a blunder with the swine flu virus or that made another boo boo in January of 2014 with a deadly anthrax sample? Is this the same CDC which also states that there is no known "cure" for Ebola and that current modes of treatment are experimental only? Headlines this week stated, "Ebola outbreak widens in Nigeria; Liberia cases top 1,000; Experts fear "shadow zones." African press tells of "alarming new cases" and of a widening circle of people sickened beyond the immediate group of caregivers who treated a dying airline passenger. WHO gives new totals of 2,615 cases with 1,427 deaths. There are now "shadow zones" where people fearing authorities won't let doctors enter, which strongly suggests the existence of an invisible caseload of patients who are not being detected by the surveillance system. This has never before been seen in an Ebola outbreak. On 8-22-14, the Central African country of Gabon announced it was barring all flights and ships from Ebola-stricken countries. South Africa announced a travel ban for non-citizens from these countries "unless the travel is considered absolutely essential." Senegal closed its borders with Guinea, and barred air or sea travel from Sierra Leone and Liberia. Cameroon barred flights from Nigeria. Now let's consider America, where health and government officials deliberately delivered two infected patients directly within our uninfected borders, going squarely against the bedrock of infectious disease control rationality. Actually, both patients (Brantly and Writebol) were surprisingly released back into full society. How do doctors know exactly when an Ebola patient is no longer contagious? Answer: They don't. Emory's healthcare team determined both patients had recovered and were free to return to their families and the community. The CDC said, "blood tests indicated both patients are now virus-free." But, there are indications that patients may continue to shed the virus even after the acute infection has subsided. Actually, WHO reported an Ebola survivor had traces of the virus in his semen 61 days after the initial infection, meaning he could theoretically be contagious during sexual intercourse weeks after he was considered disease-free. Anyone remember Typhoid Mary? We can't cure the common cold but we can supposedly cure Ebola? Have we been able to out smart the Herpes virus, hepatitis, or HIV/AIDS?

In the America that I love, are we dangerously playing with one of the deadliest viruses on the planet? Do we risk all for one?

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