



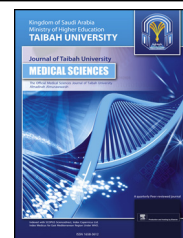
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Taibah University
Journal of Taibah University Medical Sciences

www.sciencedirect.com



Letter to the Editor

Ebola virus disease outbreak in West Africa and challenge of Hajj and Omrah in Saudi Arabia

Dear Editor

Ebola virus disease outbreak in West Africa makes an alarming message to all countries in the world, to increase the level of coordination and application of preventive measures globally to avoid a disastrous epidemic in the World, as the current situation in West Africa is critical especially after the World Health Organization increase the alarming level to an emergency in public health all over the world.¹ Ebola virus disease is a severe, often fatal disease in humans and nonhuman primates such as monkeys, gorillas, and chimpanzees.² But the critical challenge that will happen in Saudi Arabia that we have annual hajj period were about 3 million Muslims come from different countries in the world to the Mecca region to perform Hajj in a specific time and place, and this situation will carry a challenge to all health sectors in Saudi Arabia and especially the ministry of health to perform all preventive measures before hajj, during hajj and after a hajj period to avoid transmission of Ebola virus disease during hajj period, and to avoid transmission of Ebola virus during omrah period which happened all over the year time.

The magnitude of the Ebola virus health problem during Hajj and Omrah is critical because of overcrowded people in a small place which might increase the possibility of transmission of the disease, so it is highly important for ministry of health in Saudi Arabia to build up a well defined structured programme to prevent Ebola virus disease transmission, and one of the most important strategy is to implement evidence based health education to all Muslims planned to do Hajj and Omrah to increase their awareness about preventive measures. Also it is worthwhile to mention that in the recent past year Saudi Arabia has witnessed many human cases with a MERS Corona virus which need to be followed and evaluated carefully to prevent the spread

of Corona virus during Hajj and Omrah, and this recommended to be planned in a scientific approach without increasing the anxiety and fear in the community.³ It is highly important that Ministry of Health in Saudi Arabia plans the line of action strategy about the necessary Ebola preparedness plan for screening the immigrants at international airports, seaports and major ground crossing. Also there should be local governmental policies regarding the screening of immigrants at these ports, quarantine protocol and contact tracing of Ebola suspected individuals, also there should be a guideline of screening the people with fever and tracing in case if they acquire infection at entry and exit port. Also ministry of health in Saudi Arabia has recently distributed to all health care teams the infectious disease of Ebola virus diversion plans for Hajj.⁴ And this important and critical task needs the cooperation of all concern health sectors in the World to work closely together in achieving healthy hajj period and a healthy life all over the world. and finally the message to all health care workers all over the World to be aware about the Ebola virus disease and to work together in an evidence based approach and according to the instruction of the world health organization and ministries of health to achieve a healthy life in all countries.

Conflict of interest

The author has no conflict of interest to declare.

Funding

None.

Peer review under responsibility of Taibah University.



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Received 14 October 2014
Available online 21 November 2014