NEWS

WHO will review its response to Ebola once outbreak is under control

Zosia Kmietowicz

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The World Health Organization has said it will review how it responded to the outbreak of Ebola virus disease in west Africa once the infection is under control. Media reports had said that an internal WHO document had concluded that poor communication and incompetent staff led to delays in containing the outbreak.

The Associated Press reported the document as saying that WHO staff “failed to see some fairly plain writing on the wall.”

WHO figures from 17 October reported 9191 cases of Ebola virus disease in Liberia, Guinea, and Sierra Leone (the three worst affected countries) and 4546 deaths.

Reports of the outbreak were received by WHO in March, but by April the charity Médecins Sans Frontières was warning that the disease was out of control.

The draft report from WHO is said to include a timeline of the outbreak. News agencies that have seen the document have said that problems included WHO experts on the ground failing to report what was happening to headquarters in Geneva, bureaucratic hurdles stopping \$500 000 (£300 000; €400 000) reaching the response effort in Guinea, and doctors not being able to visit the area because of a lack of visas.

Médecins Sans Frontières has said that international pledges of deployment and aid for west Africa had not yet had an effect on the epidemic. The charity’s Christopher Stokes told the BBC that it was “ridiculous” that a relief agency was bearing the brunt of the caseload.

WHO said that the document being reported on was a draft chronology of the Ebola outbreak that had not yet been “fact-checked or reviewed by WHO staff involved in the initial response.” The agency said that it would be analysing its response and publishing the review when the outbreak was under control.

In a statement it said, “WHO believes in transparency and accountability and will release this review when it is fact-checked. For now, WHO’s focus is to obtain the resources needed to successfully fight this Ebola outbreak.

“We are a public health organization, and our focus right now must be to stop this outbreak and save lives. We cannot divert our limited resources from the urgent response to do a detailed analysis of the past response. That review will come, but only after this outbreak is over.”

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