



ASEAN BIODIASPORA VIRTUAL CENTER

DISEASE ALERT

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First alert: 5 December 2024 | Unknown Febrile Illness in Democratic Republic of the Congo

SUB-LOCATIONS AFFECTED

Kwango (Panzi)



Source: <https://www.theeastafrican.co.ke/tea/sustainability/health/unknown-disease-kills-143-in-southwest-dr-congo-4844708>

Event Description

An unidentified, flu-like disease has emerged in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), specifically in the Kwango province, leading to significant fatalities. From October 24 to December 4, 2024, at least 79 deaths have been reported. Symptoms associated with this illness include high fever, headaches, cough, nasal congestion, respiratory distress, and anemia. The majority of those affected are young individuals aged between 15 and 18 years. The Ministry of Public Health, Hygiene and Social Welfare is concerned about the rising number of infections, which now exceeds 300 cases, and has launched an emergency response.

Epidemiological Information

The outbreak is concentrated in the Panzi health zone of Kwango Province, an area known for its rural health challenges and limited medical resources. The regional health minister has indicated that the situation is alarming, with 376 cases reported, including 79 deaths as of December 4 (CFR=21%). The World Health Organization (WHO) has dispatched a team to assist local health authorities in investigating the characteristics and possible causes of the disease.

Response Measures

The Ministry of Public Health has mobilized resources to address the outbreak, with support from the National Institute of Public Health (INSP) and the Emergency Operations Center for Public Health (COUSP). Response efforts include:

1. Case Management: Rapid response teams have been deployed to provide immediate care to affected individuals.
2. Sample Collection: Patient samples are being collected for laboratory analysis to determine the cause of the illness.
3. Field Investigations: In-depth epidemiological investigations are being conducted to identify the source and nature of the disease.
4. Community Guidance: The public is urged to adhere to preventive measures:
 - a. Avoid mass gatherings.
 - b. Report suspicious illnesses or unusual deaths to health authorities.
 - c. Practice hand hygiene by washing hands regularly with soap and water.
 - d. Avoid handling remains of deceased individuals without qualified health personnel.

The Ministry has committed to providing regular updates on laboratory findings and the progress of investigations. Coordination with national and international health partners is ongoing to ensure an effective response to this public health crisis. For further assistance, the public can contact the Ministry's toll-free hotline at 151.

Vice Governor of Kwango announced the imminent arrival of a team of epidemiological experts to collect samples to be sent to the National Institute for Biomedical Research (INRB). The Vice Governor also announced assistance in medical supplies from WHO, SANRU, UNICEF and provincial and national elected officials of Kwango to deal with this health crisis.

Sources:

1. **BBC Africa** (2024, December 5). Unknown flu-like disease kills at least 79 people in DR Congo. Available at: <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c5y83ejz7eeo>
2. **BlueDot** (2024, December 4). BlueDot Portal. Available at: <https://portal.bluedot.global/>
3. **NBC News** (2024, December 5). Mysterious illness in Congo has killed dozens of people, health authorities report. Available at: <https://www.nbcnews.com/health/health-news/mysterious-disease-congo-kills-dozens-rcna182804>
4. Ministère de la Santé RDC (2024, December 4). Official Communiqué. Available at: https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story_fbid=pfbid02WJEWYA11DNDZctCkFDEUqPCr2uTpFT75DdRFz5Gsw4EqkBdZv1ykBN7sckZ65xl&id=100069067814722