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Oregon Hospitals, Nurses, Physicians, and Governor Kitzhaber Lay Out Updated Ebola Strategy

Portland, Ore. (October 27, 2014) – The Oregon Association of Hospitals and Health Systems, together with the leaders of several Oregon health care systems, the Oregon Nurses Association and Oregon Medical Association, joined Governor John Kitzhaber today to announce that Oregon public health officials, hospital systems, and the major medical associations have agreed upon an updated and coordinated strategy for caring for potential Ebola patients. No cases of Ebola have been diagnosed in Oregon as of today.

Six Oregon health systems have agreed to serve as referral centers for patients positively diagnosed with Ebola, indicating they will have the capacity and the training to offer appropriate and safe treatment: OHSU, Legacy Health, PeaceHealth, Providence Health & Services, Samaritan Health Services, and Kaiser Permanente Northwest.

These six organizations are prepared to accept patients who have a confirmed case of the Ebola virus from other Oregon hospitals, clinics or EMS providers, if no federal facility is available. These systems will work with the CDC and other federal and state agencies to handle any circumstances that could arise during the course of treatment.

In the meantime, all hospitals and frontline health care workers in the state of Oregon are fine tuning their response plans, which focus on identifying and isolating a suspected Ebola case and making appropriate arrangements for transfer to one of these referral sites.

Governor John Kitzhaber said: "We've engaged partners across the state, from local health departments and hospitals to health care providers and first responders, so that providers and public health professionals have the support, tools and training they need to respond to Ebola should it come to Oregon. While the risk of Ebola in Oregon is low, we take preparedness and coordination seriously. My
thanks to our hospital system and public health partners for their quick and thorough engagement on this matter."

**Andy Davidson, president and CEO of the Oregon Association of Hospitals and Health Systems**, said while readiness preparations and training are continuing in earnest, Oregon’s hospitals are ready to meet any health emergency, including potential Ebola patients. “These six systems have shown their commitment to protecting Oregon’s communities and families by stepping forward to care for those infected with Ebola. Hospitals are preparing, in partnership with their physician and nursing partners, and they will be ready on the very remote chance that Oregon discovers a patient with Ebola symptoms.”

**Dave Underriner, Chair of the OAHHS Board and CEO of Providence Health Services**, said “On behalf of the board of OAHHS, I can say that our Association members stand ready to do their part in a robust emergency preparedness strategy, whatever the public health threat is. Most recently, of course, we are proud of the work we’ve done collectively to prepare statewide for any potential Ebola case.”

**Susan King, RN, FAAN, Executive Director of the Oregon Nurses Association**, said “Nurses have a long history of caring for our patients with illnesses such as polio, HIV, H1N1, and now Ebola. The best way to protect our citizens and health care providers is by improving our knowledge and practice of the techniques we know will prevent the transmission of this disease. We are working with Oregon’s officials and our partner organizations to identify opportunities to improve our preparedness. We encourage Oregonians to become vaccinated against other communicable diseases more likely to affect us, such as the flu and measles.”

“Patients with Ebola type symptoms could present anywhere including the outpatient, private physician practice, so it’s important for all physician offices and clinics in Oregon to plan ahead and understand the proper protocols for managing these patients, isolating them if necessary and working with local public health authorities to arrange for transport,” **said Sharon Meieran, MD, Board of Trustees Member, Oregon Medical Association.** “It’s also more critical than ever for the public to get vaccinated early for Influenza,” added Meieran.

A consolidated approach to Ebola treatment offers several advantages:

- Nurses and doctors at consolidated locations, with the aid of intensive training, will develop greater proficiency in treating the unique needs of Ebola patients and in the intricate safety measures necessary to prevent exposure.
- Relying on fewer Ebola treatment sites ensures that the communication and operationalization of the latest information from state, federal, and international health agencies is streamlined.
Caring for an Ebola patient requires many specially trained medical staff, complex waste management procedures, a significant quantity of personal protective equipment, and other resources; by consolidating care, Oregon’s health care providers are better able to deploy personnel and resources.

Oregon hospitals and health officials have been focused on preparing to keep Oregon families safe from the Ebola virus. Many hospitals have worked with local public health officials to conduct tabletop exercises and drills in recent weeks to ensure coordinated responses. At the same time, Oregon hospitals have examined training and preparedness levels and adjusted to the new sets of CDC guidance on Ebola.

The **Oregon Association of Hospitals and Health Systems (OAHHS)** is a statewide, nonprofit trade association that works closely with local and national government leaders, business and citizen coalitions, and other professional health care organizations to enhance and promote community health and to continue improving Oregon’s innovative health care community. - See more at: [http://www.oahhs.org/](http://www.oahhs.org/)

The **Oregon Nurses Association (ONA)** was founded in 1904 as the professional association for nurses in Oregon. It is a nonprofit association and a labor union representing registered nurses. ONA’s mission is to advocate for nursing and quality health care. Learn more at [http://www.oregonrn.org/](http://www.oregonrn.org/)

The **Oregon Medical Association** provides legislative and practice advocacy, regulatory review and educational opportunities to aid nearly 8,000 physicians, physicians assistants and student members in their efforts to improve the health of Oregonians. Additional information can be found at [www.theOMA.org](http://www.theOMA.org)

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