

Ebola death toll: are we doing enough?

Since March this year, over 3500 people in western Africa have been affected by the Ebola virus, with over 1,800 people suffering fatalities.

The virus, which is contagious, has affected the countries of Guinea, Liberia, Nigeria, Senegal and Sierra Leone in this most recent outbreak.

Discovered in 1976, the causes for Ebola are not clearly defined, but are said to involve contact with an infected animal's bodily fluids.

Amongst humans, the disease is spread by bodily fluids and secretions - and because there is no vaccine, measures must be taken to slow contagion.

What more can we do?

According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), £360m is the very least needed to combat the current outbreak. They have warned that up to 20,000 people could be infected before the virus is brought under control.

Medecin Sans Frontiers (MSF), the international medical aid group, has stated that the global response to the crisis has been inadequate and that military intervention is necessary in the fight against Ebola.

MSF believe that the only way to bring the outbreak under control is for military and civilian teams capable of dealing with a biological disaster to be immediately deployed.

These calls have been heeded by the French, who have sent 20 experts to the infected area - the UK must follow suit. Although the foreign office has already donated well over £3m to the relief effort, more expertise and personnel is needed in the region.

Will there ever be a cure?

Ebola outbreaks have been sporadically appearing across Africa for over 35 years, yet the search for a vaccine is still ongoing. New medical research has uncovered possible ideas for trials, but there is no answer yet.

How can we stop the death toll?

If Western powers join together to provide financial aid and personnel then the death toll will slowly decrease. As the disease is not spread by regular everyday contact (such as shaking hands), in theory it is relatively simple to slow the transmission of the disease.

This has not proved to be the case, primarily because the people in the region are afraid and do not know the correct preventative measures. These residents should be educated in how to stop the spread of the disease.

World superpowers should be investing their resources in Western Africa, because there is no telling how far the virus could spread. The region needs to be able to both treat and educate its people, and they cannot do it on their own.