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JOINT STATEMENT from the Hospital Association of Rhode Island (HARI represents Butler Hospital, Kent Hospital, Landmark Medical Center, Memorial Hospital of Rhode Island, Our Lady of Fatima Hospital, Providence VA Medical Center, Roger Williams Medical Center, South County Hospital, Women & Infants Hospital and Westerly Hospital), Lifespan, the Rhode Island Department of Health, Rhode Island State Nurses Association, Rhode Island Medical Society, and Rhode Island Academy of Physician Assistants on

Ebola Preparedness in Rhode Island

Ebola preparedness is something Rhode Island's hospitals and health care workers are taking very seriously. Statewide preparedness efforts related to Ebola began several months ago, and have included representatives of government, hospitals, nurses, physicians, physician assistants, EMS providers, infection control professionals, emergency preparedness coordinators and other health care providers.

Health care organizations across our state are on high alert to watch for potential Ebola cases and take immediate action to isolate that individual and implement full precautions to protect staff and the community. Hospitals have reviewed all appropriate policies and protocols; identified areas in the hospital that would be used for patient isolation; inventoried supplies including personal protective equipment for employees; and provided training and best practices to staff on patient identification, isolation, infection prevention and use of protective equipment.

Our health care providers train for emergencies every day. There is a coordinated system led by the Rhode Island Department of Health, to manage public health emergencies. This system provides a forum for identifying gaps, dispatching solutions, sharing best practices and real-time communication.

All hospitals have voluntarily agreed to participate in “stress testing” led by the Rhode Island Department of Health. These tests, which will include mock patients seeking emergency department treatment, will allow us to better identify potential gaps. Together, we will share best practices and identify solutions to strengthen our preparedness and response.

Now, more than ever, collaboration among all those involved in caring for our community – nurses, doctors, EMS providers, hospital support staff, firefighters, police, sanitation workers, health officials, and others – is critical. Now is the time to share our collective wisdom to stop Ebola from spreading further.

The emergence of the Ebola virus has heightened awareness of all hospitals and health care workers of the importance of following strict infection control procedures. Hospital leaders are acutely aware of the potential for employees to contract illnesses and are deeply invested in continuously refining protocols and training to minimize that risk.

It is important to remember that this situation is fluid and rapidly changing. Our preparations will require adjustments as we learn more about the best ways to treat Ebola patients and protect our health care workers. Hospitals are committed to providing front-line staff with continued rigorous training related to Ebola response. We need to remain flexible as we receive new guidance from national experts. However, we all work toward a mutual goal of providing appropriate, high-quality care at the right time and the right place, while keeping hospital and clinical staff safe.

Finally, we send our sincere appreciation to the nurses, physicians, laboratory workers, physician assistants, environmental services workers, EMS personnel and others who have chosen a career of caring for others.

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