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Web Roundup: Ebola 3: Epidemic, Endemic, Continuation as Aftermath?

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Now that the [crisis has waned](#), will we continue to discuss Ebola as a persistent threat? Or will we let ourselves forget, right up until the next terrifying epidemic?

The process of rebuilding lives and social systems after Ebola [is in progress](#) (see NPR's multimedia presentation "[Life After Death](#)"). The possibility that Ebola will become endemic – existing at a constant rate within the human population in affected areas of West Africa – portends [a new normal](#), which some characterize as [a sign of failure](#). [Lassa fever](#), which is a severe and often fatal hemorrhagic illness caused by Lassa virus, is already endemic in the area. The aftermath for MSF is continued work in the face of [continued sorrow](#). The aftermath for WHO involves [reconsideration and reform](#).

We have had our own aftermath in my local area. Only hours after my last [Web Roundup \(Ebola Update\)](#) came the news that Dr. Craig Spencer had tested positive for the virus and was being [treated at Bellevue Hospital](#). I was scheduled to attend a conference at the adjacent NYU medical center the next morning ([A Symposium on World Polio Day and Dr. Salk's Centenary](#)). Should I be afraid of catching Ebola? I wondered. I wasn't particularly concerned. Will the conference be cancelled? No, I thought, most of the people there are infectious disease specialists, so this is unlikely to worry them too much. (I should have worried more about the traffic, particularly since the media response caused a great deal of chaos in the area.) Dr. Spencer has [written this article about his experiences](#), which provides valuable insight into the crisis from his unique point of view.

The next quarantine crisis involved Kaci Hickox, New Jersey Governor Chris Christie, and a Maine town. Plenty of people have had a great deal to say about that one ([even me](#)). The focus on the ethical dimensions of Ebola continues in public, [academic](#), and official [government](#) discourse. [Vaccine trials](#) have raised questions about [the ethics of using placebo](#) controls as well as the [persistent effects of mistrust](#).

So, what comes next? I have had the great fortune of taking courses in the

past on emerging infectious disease from [Dr. Stephen Morse](#) at Columbia Mailman School of Public Health. He recently alerted me to a recent IOM conference on Ebola, and a number of the presentation slides are [available here](#). I have long trusted his insight into viruses in general, and perhaps the accuracy of his past predictions about Ebola ([made in August 2014](#)) will convince you as well. So at least we may be reassured that Ebola will not suddenly evolve to be airborne. At a recent lecture, Dr. Morse also identified the potential importance of [rehydration therapy for treating Ebola](#), suggesting that lessons learned from Cholera in the past may find new applications.

Additional notes:

- And a new worry: [It is possible that Ebola could be transmitted through sex](#).
- The number of links I have been collecting on this topic is large, so I am in the process of attempting to organize them on delicious.com [@smbergst \[Ebola\]](#). This is a bit of an experiment to see if this particular organizational format proves useful for academic and academic-adjacent endeavors. I am apparently one of the very few to use it for anything Ebola-related.
- Even as one arc of suffering comes to an end, there is always another ready to take its place. Sometimes we find ourselves connected to these events through the intricacies and intimacies of long-term fieldwork relationships across global communities. This is the now the case for my friend and fellow medical anthropologist [Dr. Jan Brunson at University of Hawai'i](#):
 - [Support Mothers in Nepal Quake](#): *"I am a scholar and a professor of cultural anthropology, not someone typically involved in social work or humanitarian efforts. But because the people of this community hold a special place in my heart, I feel I must try to support them in this time of dire need. This community, Budhanilkantha, is no more deserving of your support than any other community in Nepal, but it is also no less deserving. And because of my personal and professional long-term connection to this place, I can promise that donations will directly assist pregnant women and new mothers and their families as they struggle to rebuild their lives. Thank you for considering donating – even the smallest amount will be appreciated. Namaste."*

AMA citation

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