## Objectives and Background

Ebola virus has been detected in the semen of men after their recovery from Ebola virus disease (EVD), but little information is available about its prevalence or the duration of its persistence. A pilot study involving 100 male survivors of EVD was conducted in Sierra Leone. A preliminary report, recently published in the NEJM concluded that that there is persistence of Ebola virus RNA in semen. 11 of 43 (26%) of the participants who had semen specimen obtained 7 to 9 months after onset of disease were positive for Ebola virus RNA. These data showed the persistence of Ebola virus RNA in semen and declining persistence with increasing months since the onset of EVD.

We do not yet have data on the extent to which positivity of RT-PCR is associated with virus infectivity. Although cases of suspected sexual transmission of Ebola have been reported, they are rare; hence the risk of sexual transmission of the Ebola virus is being investigated.

Programs such as semen testing and preventive behavioural counselling are needed in order to help survivors of EVD appreciate and mitigate the possible risk of sexual transmission. Such programs would help men and women understand their individual risk and take appropriate measures to protect their sexual partners, specifically in regard to condom use and disposal, and could provide links to care and counselling programs for survivors. Because semen-testing programs are not yet universally available, outreach activities are needed to provide education regarding recommendations and risks to survivor communities and sexual partners of survivors in a way that does not further stigmatize the community of survivors of EVD.

The pilot study which focused essentially on men and semen testing, has been extended in November 2015 to include men and women, and to add a second site to the study. More samples are being collected: tears, saliva, sweat, urine, semen, rectal swab, vaginal secretion, menstrual blood and breast milk in lactating women.

In parallel, the semen which tested positive in the pilot study, have been sent to US-CDC in Atlanta for viral isolation. And as off November 2015, there are still 20 men follow-up in the cohort.

### Geographic location

Sierra Leone

### Main deliverables


### Sources of funding

WHO and others

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18 November 2015

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