Managing stigma and discrimination in healthcare settings during Monkeypox

THE GLOBAL SITUATION & ADVICE ON STIGMA AND DISCRIMINATION SPECIFIC TO HEALTH CARE SETTINGS
Global epidemiological situation

Data as of 04 October 2022, 17:00 CEST

Since 1 Jan 2022, cases reported to WHO from 106 Member States / territories (new: Egypt) across all 6 WHO regions

- As of 04 October 2022 (17h CEST), a total of **68,900 confirmed cases** including **26 deaths (-2 due to reclassification, +2)**, have been reported to WHO
- From Week 38 to 39 the number of new weekly cases **decreased by 16.8%** (n=3045)
Monkeypox currently a Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC)

Cases continue to be reported across WHO regions

- Reported since 1970s, but since May 2022, the outbreak has rapidly spread to many new countries and shown atypical symptoms
- New modes of transmission are being reported
- Clear risk of further international spread
Men continue to be disproportionately affected. Many of them have identified as gay, bisexual or Men having Sex with Men (MSM)

- Males between 18-44 years of age continue to be disproportionately affected
- Those who identify as gay, bisexual or MSM and those with recent multiple partners have been primarily affected
- Among cases with known HIV status, a large proportion are HIV positive
- Many health workers have also been infected, mostly in the community. At least three cases of infection due to occupational exposure has been reported
- Pregnant women, children and those immunocompromised continue to be vulnerable and should take precautions
What is stigma and discrimination?

Stigma is the negative association between a person or group of people who share certain characteristics (e.g., stereotyping, negative portrayals in popular culture, the media or public discourse etc.)

- Stigma is often fueled by fear or anxiety, but stigmatizing language can also be used by people accidentally due to a lack of awareness
- Discrimination is the behaviours that result from stigmatizing attitudes or beliefs (e.g., policies and services that exclude or miss certain people, isolating some groups of people from others, hostile behaviour)

Levels of stigma:
intersecting stigma

The LGBTQI+ community often faces higher levels of stigma due to layered or intersectional stigma

- Layered or intersectional stigma occurs when a group that is already marginalized for one reason is additionally marginalized when they are identified with a different stigmatized group or factor
- Venereal and dermatological diseases are particularly stigmatized, especially those causing visible disfigurements—even if transitory
- Monkeypox symptoms include skin rashes and lesions


Graphic adapted from socioecological model by Placek et al., 2019
Patients seeking health-care

Discrimination in health-care settings reduces the quality of life of individuals who experience it and impedes the use of health services

- Discriminatory laws, policies and practices, and a lack of protective laws and policies have pernicious effects on the environment in which health care is provided
- It is often directed towards some of the most marginalized in society, including people living with HIV and key populations, on the basis of their age, sex, race or ethnicity, physical, mental health status, disability, sexual orientation or gender identity, nationality, asylum or migration status, criminal record or other.

Zero Discrimination in Health-Care-Settings: Background document for UNAIDS Programme Coordinating Board
Health workers delivering care

Stigma and discrimination can also affect health workers

• Negative attitudes and fears, compounded by inadequate training or protocols may, may lead to inadequate care.

• Health workers may also avoid engaging for fear of association with the disease and those most impacted

Zero Discrimination in Health-Care-Settings: Background document for UNAIDS Programme Coordinating Board
Addressing stigma and discrimination

1. Monitoring discrimination in health-care settings, including the experiences of health service users, as well as the attitudes and practices of service providers

2. Educating the health workforce, including pre-service and in-service training to develop human rights and gender equality competencies

3. Protecting health workers through the effective implementation of occupational health and safety standards and respecting the labour rights of health workers
Addressing stigma and discrimination (continued)

4 Strengthen capacity of community health workers and building community interventions, and ensuring appropriate linkages between communities and formal health systems

5 Empower health service users and increasing their access to justice by making them aware of and able to claim their rights, including those to discrimination-free health care, through rights/legal literacy programmes and legal services

6 Ensure meaningful participation and involvement of people living with HIV and key and affected populations, as well as of community-based organizations

Zero Discrimination in Health-Care-Settings: Background document for UNAIDS Programme Coordinating Board
Understanding, preventing and addressing stigma and discrimination related to monkeypox

- The inclusive language guide provides guidance for different operational actors, partners and stakeholders, including health systems, media and contact tracers in the context of Monkeypox

- Stigma and discrimination must be mitigated through active strategies to prevent people being unable or unwilling to access health services and support and to create an enabling environment where people feel able to report their symptoms

WHO interim guidance on using inclusive language in understanding, preventing and addressing stigma and discrimination related to monkeypox
Considerations for different operational actors, partners and stakeholders

Health systems and health workers

• Understand and use appropriate terminology and language

• Make healthcare facilities welcoming and non-judgmental, where people can trust their privacy and confidentiality will be respected

• Stigmatizing attitudes (such as vocal or implied disapproval of identities or behaviours) and discriminatory treatment (such as refusing to treat people; testing or treating without consent and/or sharing unauthorized personal data) undermines trust and increases the likelihood that people will avoid seeking care

• Ensure health workers are properly supported and trained to recognize stigma and have the support structures needed to respond
Considerations for different operational actors, partners and stakeholders (continued)

**Media**

- Support ethical journalism, negative reporting has the potential to influence the perception and treatment of people who have or are suspected to have monkeypox and their families and affected communities.
- Use appropriate language and images
- Fact check their content and reporting

**Contract tracing**

- Ensure that confidentiality is respected, and privacy measures are in place
- Avoid asking patients to elaborate on the specific nature of their contacts’ possible exposures
- Encourage people to privately notify their contacts and sexual partners and encourage them to reach out to public health authorities directly for testing and/or care
## Additional resources

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Resource</th>
<th>Link</th>
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<tr>
<td>OpenWHO: Monkeypox introduction</td>
<td><a href="https://openwho.org/courses/monkeypox-introduction">https://openwho.org/courses/monkeypox-introduction</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>OpenWHO: Monkeypox epidemiology, preparedness and response</td>
<td><a href="https://openwho.org/courses/monkeypox-intermediate">https://openwho.org/courses/monkeypox-intermediate</a></td>
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<td>EPI-WIN webinar: Managing stigma in healthcare settings in public health emergencies such as monkeypox</td>
<td><a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D_28DCThIo">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D_28DCThIo</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Monkeypox outbreak toolbox</td>
<td><a href="https://www.who.int/emergencies/outbreak-toolkit/disease-outbreak-toolboxes/monkeypox-outbreak-toolbox">https://www.who.int/emergencies/outbreak-toolkit/disease-outbreak-toolboxes/monkeypox-outbreak-toolbox</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Multi-country monkeypox outbreak: External situation reports</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Key facts about Monkeypox</td>
<td><a href="https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/monkeypox">https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/monkeypox</a></td>
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Additional resources (continued)

WHO website: Monkeypox
https://www.who.int/health-topics/monkeypox/#tab=tab_1

Monkeypox Q&A
https://www.who.int/philippines/news/q-a-detail/monkeypox

Monkeypox: public health advice for gay, bisexual and other men who have sex with men
https://www.who.int/publications/m/item/monkeypox-public-health-advice-for-men-who-have-sex-with-men