



THE AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF  
IMMUNOLOGISTS

**Statement of Clifford Harding, M.D., Ph.D.  
Chair, Committee on Public Affairs, on behalf of  
The American Association of Immunologists (AAI)  
September 12, 2014**

The Ebola epidemic, which has already killed more than 2,400 people and sickened thousands more in five West African countries, threatens the lives, well-being, and economic and political stability of people throughout the region and around the world. This epidemic urgently requires a two-prong strategy.

In the long term, basic biomedical research, including research on the immune response, virology, disease pathology, and vaccine development, is necessary to develop efficacious and affordable therapies to prevent, treat, and potentially cure Ebola and other highly contagious, devastating infectious diseases. Because these diseases pose an immediate threat to international public health, the U.S. government, and governments throughout the world, must increase substantially their investment in basic biomedical research, reduce burdensome regulations which delay advances, and facilitate domestic and international scientific collaboration. In particular, government sponsorship of biomedical research is necessary to minimize the threat of emerging pathogens and pathogens endemic to economically troubled regions, including Ebola, severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS), Middle East respiratory syndrome (MERS), chikungunya virus, and neglected tropical diseases.

In the short term, the spread of Ebola can best be addressed by following the advice of knowledgeable and informed scientific and public health experts, including Dr. Anthony Fauci, Director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID), and Dr. Thomas Frieden, Director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Recommended public measures for containing the spread of Ebola include the following: the isolation of infected individuals, the tracing of contacts of those who are infected, quarantine, and the use of proper precautions by the dedicated health care workers who are fighting this battle. Infected individuals need immediate, effective, and compassionate medical care. The entire world must support these efforts. Without these measures, the Ebola epidemic will not be contained, and will pose a true threat to all of humanity.

AAI applauds the recent decision of the Obama Administration to utilize the U.S. military to provide logistical and operational assistance to stem the outbreak, and to seek from Congress funding to provide additional personnel, supplies and equipment to the area. We urge Congress and the international community to act immediately to provide funding and other assistance needed to address the current Ebola epidemic and to invest in biomedical research that will help prevent, treat, and cure Ebola and other devastating infectious diseases.