



Public Health
England

Protecting and improving the nation's health



Duncan Selbie
Chief Executive

Friday message

Friday 7 November 2014

Dear everyone

The PHE mobile laboratory at Kerry Town in Sierra Leone is now up and running under the direction of Dr Tim Brooks and his team, drawn from across PHE, Dstl, the NHS and academe. Everyone has worked round the clock to meet the very tight deadlines, overcoming challenges ranging from an intermittent power supply to no running water with more than a little help from their friends in the Royal Logistics Corps, the Royal Engineers and 'Barcode', the Belizean electrician. The entire team is putting in an outstanding effort and making considerable personal sacrifices to do so. They have been supported throughout by their colleagues back home, with everything from training, HR, and procurement, to biosafety guidance and logistics, and also by DFID here and in Sierra Leone, who have ensured our work is fully integrated within the wider UK response. Our scientists at Colindale and Porton are also supporting the developments and infrastructure needed to maintain the programme and deal with the outbreak as it evolves, moving into more epidemiological and therapeutic studies in the medium term, and checking for viral evolution. Immediately following the opening of our laboratory, the main UK-sponsored Kerry Town Treatment Centre opened its doors and nothing could more poignantly emphasise the need for international support, as even before it was officially taking patients, a man risked his own life when he carried in his seriously ill niece for treatment: the only survivor of her family of six. She had Ebola. In truth words of thanks are insufficient but they are heartfelt. What our people, and our partners, are doing here and on the ground in Sierra Leone is UK public health science and practice at its very best.

Earlier this week I attended the Annual Meeting of the International Association of National Public Health Institutes (IANPHI) in Marrakech. IANPHI brings together the leaders of 90 of the world's national public health institutes to share knowledge, collaborate, link assets and foster strong partnerships. From the smallest to the largest country, we have a great deal in common as we tackle essentially the same public health challenges and there is much to learn from one another. We heard from Nigeria and Guinea about their work on Ebola, with Nigeria now Ebola-free, and from other countries, from Brazil to Somalia and all points in between. We took the opportunity to share our UK commitment to global health, including our peer relationships through IANPHI with Uganda, Kenya, Sierra Leone and South Africa, as well as our developing links with Pakistan and the Caribbean.

I am delighted to note that Chris Carrigan, our Director of the National Cancer Intelligence Network and Dr Jem Rashbass, our Director for Disease Registration have been recognised in the Health Service Journal's prestigious list of 50 Innovators of 2014. Chris was recognised for founding the Intelligence Network and his tireless work in improving care and outcomes for cancer patients and Jem for proving the value of big data in healthcare, receiving particular praise for the development of the National Cancer Registration Service for England.

And finally, congratulations to Professor Paul Cosford, our Medical Director and Director for Health Protection, who has been awarded a professorship with the University of Chester.

With best wishes