Reviewer's report

Title: Ebola haemorrhagic fever outbreak in Masindi District, Uganda

Version: 1 Date: 10 September 2010

Reviewer: Amy L Hartman

Reviewer's report:

This is a well-written descriptive manuscript describing the epidemiological course of a specific part of the 2000 Ebola Sudan outbreak in Uganda. The paper focuses on the part of the outbreak that occurred in the Masindi District. The report covers the epidemiology of the outbreak, including specific narrative details on the response effort by various parties. This report is a really useful description of the outbreak with a focus on what responses worked and what failed, including recommendations for future outbreaks. I believe this report is important to the scientific community. In many previous Ebola outbreaks, the details of the outbreak and subsequent response have not been well-documented, and it is difficult to learn from the experience to benefit future outbreaks. This manuscript contributes to our knowledge of specific outbreak responses to deadly hemorrhagic fever outbreaks in resource-poor settings.

Discretionary Revisions:

1. In general, the figure legends need more detail. Provide additional descriptive detail in each figure legend to describe the intent of the figure. For example, Figure 3’s legend reads simply “EHF outbreak, Masindi District, Uganda, 2000.” Include additional information such as “Graph shows the number of laboratory confirmed Ebola cases over the course of the outbreak. Fatal and non-fatal cases are indicated.” That is just an example.

2. Table 2: There is a lot of data in this table and it is a bit confusing to interpret. Is there a better, clearer way to present the data?

3. Table 3: Format of the table is not clear; please revise to a better format. It is also not clear exactly what the statistics are referring to (i.e. which groups are being compared in the statistical tests – this information can possibly be included in a more descriptive figure legend)

4. For figure 5, on the figure itself, please differentiate the actual legend on the figure from the rest of the figure by a box or other demarcation. As it is, it is difficult to tell the figure from the legend. Provide and explanation of the arrow (Kaduku Trading Centre) and lines connecting the houses. Do these represent streets or walking paths?

Level of interest: An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests
Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

Declaration of competing interests:
I declare that I have no competing interests.