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WHO declares Mpox outbreak a public health emergency of international concern

August 19, 2024 | News

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Mpox (monkeypox) has been declared a public health emergency of international concern (PHEIC) under the International Health Regulations (2005) (IHR) by WHO. Mpox is on the rise in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and an increasing number of African countries

A committee of independent experts from the IHR reviewed data presented earlier in the day by experts from the WHO and affected countries before recommending Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus' declaration. Mpox appears to be a PHEIC, with the potential to spread further across Africa and possibly beyond.

Mpox is caused by an orthopoxvirus and is endemic to central and western Africa. Mpox was neglected in Africa, causing a global outbreak in July 2022. MPox spread rapidly via sexual contact across a range of countries where it had never been seen before, resulting in a multi-country outbreak that was declared a PHEIC. The rapid spread of a new virus strain in the DRC, clade 1b, which appears to be spreading through sexual networks, as well as its detection in neighboring countries last year

The two vaccines currently in use for mpox are recommended by WHO’s Strategic Advisory Group of Experts on Immunization. WHO anticipates an immediate funding requirement of an initial $15 million to support surveillance, preparedness and response activities. To allow for an immediate scale up, WHO has released $1.45 million from the WHO Contingency Fund for Emergencies and may need to release more in the coming days.