

Korea ill-prepared to handle Ebola: Health experts

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Singapore: With the [United States](#) registering its first case of Ebola, Asian nations have started assessing their preparedness to handle potential outbreaks if any. South Korean health experts have expressed concern, stating that the country is ill-prepared to fight an Ebola epidemic.

Dr Shin Hyun Young, a physician and the spokesman of the biggest representative body of South Korean doctors told *The Straits Times Asia* that many local hospitals do not have quarantine facilities and they must not ideally treat any Ebola patients as healthcare workers are the most vulnerable section of the society to fall prey to this deadly disease.

The experts have also raised concerns that the Korean healthcare workers were not "instructed enough" in the proper protocol for caring for a potential Ebola case, and do not have adequate numbers of safe protective equipment. Dr Young said that all Korean medics must undergo mock drills before handling cases of Ebola.

Dr Young also cautioned that the current preventive measures at Korean hospitals were not strong enough to prevent Ebola from multiplying in the Korean soil. "There is no guarantee that the hospitals without quarantine units won't receive Ebola patients. Protective gear is needed for every health facility," she added.

The Korean Health Ministry had identified a total of 17 hospitals with quarantine units as official facilities to treat patients should Ebola occur in South Korea. Dr Young also underscored that the country's healthcare workers must be properly

instructed to use the protective gear as an efficient barrier against Ebola.

The Korea Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, however reiterated that the agency was educating as many healthcare workers as possible. Mr Kim Young Taek, CDC, said, "We are keeping track of everyone who has visited the Ebola-affected countries. We have very clear safety protocols and all health care workers are currently being educated."