To the Editor:

The recent outbreak of Ebola virus disease (EVD) in Africa, with sporadic cases in other countries, has received much media attention and also presents a unique opportunity for nurse educators. Many health professions students will have questions about EVD and their role in identifying and managing patients with EVD or other highly contagious or high-consequence pathogens.

Although the outbreak has had dire consequences, it also presents an opportunity to reinforce many important components of nursing education programs for students at all levels of preparation. For example, the outbreak can demonstrate important lessons about infection prevention that are already an integral part of fundamental coursework. Leadership and community health nursing faculty can use the current outbreak as an example of coordinated local, national, and international public health efforts. Nursing students can build on their understanding of the pathophysiology and treatment of contagious viral conditions and, in turn, can help to educate patients and the public about the disease to calm fears.

As nurse educators, the lessons learned from EVD outbreak can be used to reinforce and discuss important components of nursing practice, as well as to help allay students concerns.

To assist nursing faculty, the authors have prepared a series of talking points for nurse educators, which is available at http://hdl.handle.net/1811/61959.

This teaching guide addresses critical topics for nurses, including isolation precautions, evidence-based practice, leadership, interdisciplinary practice, community health, and clinical care. The content has been developed to be appropriate for students at all levels of nursing education programs. The guide also provides a comprehensive list of current recommendations from national and international guidelines, as well as Web links to major professional organizations.

A virus outbreak, such as the devastating EVD outbreak, presents an opportunity to use a highly visible topic to underscore key lessons throughout the nursing curriculum. As nurse educators, we are in a unique position to help address students’ concerns and to provide factual information to our colleagues and students. This is an important opportunity, and the authors hope that the teaching guide will provide an additional resource for faculty to address the topic with students.

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