

## **CDC Director: A Disease Outbreak Anywhere Is A Risk Everywhere**

Dr. Tom Frieden

Let me tell you the story of an outbreak that could have happened, and didn't.

A year ago, a mother traveled to the Democratic Republic of the Congo with the body of her son, who had died suddenly in rural Uganda. She came in contact with many people in her travels and at the funeral.

She soon died, as did the man who helped transport her and the body of her son.

What could have gone on to become a major outbreak, killing many people, was stopped because health officials acted quickly.

Workers in Uganda, trained by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, contacted staff at the local plague laboratory. Using a rapid dipstick test, the lab quickly determined that the cause of death was [pneumonic plague](#) [1], one of the world's most deadly diseases.

Within 12 hours, preventive medicine was provided to more than 130 people who had come in contact with the family. The number of deaths was stopped at three.

### **A blind spot anywhere is a risk to us everywhere**

Keeping people safe is the role of public health agencies such as the CDC -- a role that becomes even more important every day. We are all connected by the air we breathe, the water we drink and the food we eat, and the next outbreak may be just a plane ride away.

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#### **Links:**

[1] <http://www.doh.wa.gov/Emergencies/EmergencyPreparednessandResponse/Factsheets/PneumonicPlague.aspx>

[2] <http://www.cnn.com/2013/09/20/health/disease-outbreak-risk-frieden/index.html>