



In Search of Better Health

Press Statement

To: News Editors

Event: Position on alleged Influenza Outbreak Reported by KEMRI Researchers

Date: Friday, 17th, December 2021

Our attention has been drawn to a newspaper articles and alerts circulating on both local media and social media on some alleged 'outbreak of influenza in the country under the title "*KEMRI Study Reveals Influenza Outbreak*".

We wish to state as follows:

1. KEMRI has not reported any 'influenza outbreak in the country as allegedly reported by the newspaper article. Indeed, this information attributed to our research is not only incorrect, but also taken out of context and has only succeeded in causing undue panic to members of the public.
2. The alleged 'outbreak' is based on a total of the 36 samples tested over a three-month period from September to November 2021 during our usual surveillance exercise in the country.
3. Out of this total of 36 samples, only four (4) tested positive for flu which is insignificant finding to warrant concerns of an influenza outbreak especially within the tropics.
4. On average, the four positive tests within a three-month period may equate to nearly one positive case per month which does not reach the threshold of an influenza outbreak. Past outbreaks have involved higher percentage of cases being positive. In one incident, 150 samples testing positive from a sample of 250 and another case 14 out of 20 samples tested positive.
5. We know from our long-term studies in Kenya that influenza viruses circulate all year, so you can expect a certain number of people to have the flu at any given time which is not considered an outbreak. Indeed, previous studies has shown that Kenya records two peaks following rainy seasons. In

our opinion, the information above is not sufficient to declare this as an outbreak.

6. Having said that, a single case of an Ebola virus or poliovirus infection is always considered an outbreak due to the severity of these infections or the virus's eradication status, but this is not the case for influenza virus infections especially in the tropics.
7. Overall, the public should therefore not panic about the reported 'outbreak' of influenza but should instead exercise higher standards of personal hygiene including hand washing, not crowding, eating healthy and visit your local health provider as preventive measures.

For more information, please contact Wodera James on 0743 974 723, 020-3586994 or KEMRI Corporate Communications Department on 2713349/2722541.