

Opening Statement of the Honorable Joseph R. Pitts
Subcommittee on Health
Hearing on “Examining Medical Product Development in the Wake of the Ebola
Epidemic”
November 19, 2014

(As Prepared for Delivery)

The world is currently experiencing the largest Ebola outbreak in history. The worldwide death toll is at least 5,177 people, according to the World Health Organization’s November 14th situation report.

Although the initial response to the Ebola outbreak was slow, it is now a top priority for the global public health community including the United States. At today’s hearing, the subcommittee will examine an important aspect of the Ebola crisis – medical product development.

As Ebola spread, therapeutics were desperately needed to prevent, diagnose, and treat the disease. Federal agencies and drug and device manufacturers hurried to find treatments, vaccines, and diagnostics for this deadly disease. Adding to the frustration, none of the medications with the most promise are FDA-approved, and need to be tested in clinical trials that will take time.

In light of the nation’s substantial investment in public health emergency preparedness, many are wondering why no proven Ebola medications are currently available and what the federal government is doing to expedite their approval.

Specifically, what is FDA doing to accelerate their review of products, how is BARDA assisting companies to prepare for clinical trials, what is the plan for manufacturing, and how and where will these medical products be distributed once they are approved or cleared?

Questions are also being asked about the Administration’s recent \$6.18 billion emergency appropriations request, including how much of the request is for development of medical products, and how previous funding requests have been allocated and spent.

I would like to thank all of our witnesses for being here today, and I look forward to their testimony.

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