The Rwanda Biomedical Center (RBC) has reported a concerning increase in Mpox cases, with four to five new infections identified each week.

Dr. Edson Rwagasore, Division Manager of Public Health Surveillance and Emergency Preparedness at RBC, stated that over 95% of the cases are transmitted through sexual contact. These insights were shared during an interview on Waramutse Rwanda, a program on RTV, on Tuesday, December 10, 2024.

Dr. Rwagasore highlighted that the upward trend in Mpox cases is not only affecting Rwanda but is also evident in neighboring countries, signaling a broader regional public health challenge.

“Every week, we are diagnosing between 4 and 5 new cases, and most of these are linked to sexual transmission,” Dr. Rwagasore stated. “The majority of patients we encounter—over 95%—are infected through sexual intercourse.”

The emergence of Mpox comes after Rwanda successfully managed an outbreak of the Marburg virus. While the Marburg crisis has been declared officially over, Dr. Rwagasore emphasized that health authorities continue to monitor the situation closely, with efforts focused on managing both outbreaks simultaneously.

“While the Marburg outbreak appears to be under control, with no new cases reported from recent tests, we are still vigilant. We remain committed to tackling Mpox, which is spreading through similar transmission patterns,” he said.

Dr. Rwagasore also provided an update on the status of Marburg, noting that of the over 1,700 people who had been in contact with those infected, none have shown symptoms of the virus after follow-up tests. This, he said, gave health officials confidence that the outbreak was effectively contained.

“With the absence of new cases and no signs of Marburg among those exposed, we are optimistic that in the next ten days, the World Health Organization will officially declare the Marburg outbreak over in Rwanda,” he added.

Reflecting on the lessons learned from previous health crises, particularly the COVID-19 pandemic, Dr. Rwagasore noted that Rwanda’s preparedness has strengthened its response to these epidemics. The country has made significant strides in building healthcare capacity, which played a crucial role in managing the Marburg outbreak and is now proving vital in addressing Mpox.

“The fact that many people are recovering is a clear sign that the country was well-prepared. The experience from COVID-19 helped us build the necessary treatment infrastructure, and this has given us the ability to effectively manage both the Marburg and Mpox outbreaks,” he said.

The first case of Mpox in Rwanda was reported on July 27, 2024, and since then, the country has been closely monitoring and responding to the spread of the disease.

Rwanda continues to navigate these public health challenges, authorities urge the public to take necessary precautions to reduce the risk of transmission, particularly through sexual contact.