**ABSTRACT**

**VIRAL HEMORRHAGIC FEVERS (VHFs)**

**LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

1. Describe epidemiology and transmission of VHFs
2. Describe signs and symptoms of viral hemorrhagic fevers (Lassa fever, CCHF, and Ebol ).
3. List preventive and control measures as well as main public health concern during disease outbreak.

Viral haemorrhagic fevers (VHFs) are a group of febrile illnesses caused by RNA viruses from several viral families. Lassa (Arenaviridae), CCHF(Bunyaviridae), Ebola (Filoviridae).The viruses and the disease it causes are geographically restricted to the areas where their host species live. Outbreaks can however occur anywhere due to international travels.

Primary transmission occurs when humans have contact with blood, urine, faeces, saliva or other body secretions from infected multimammate rat (lassa), Bat (Ebola) or Tick bite (CCHF). Secondary transmission is from person to person.

Initial signs and symptoms are non-specific, difficult to distinguish from a host of other febrile illnesses. It typically begins with fever and constitutional symptoms and may progress to bleeding under the skin, in internal organs, or from body orifices. CNS manifestation may be noted in end –stage.

Diagnosis is by serology and nucleic acid amplification testing [reverse transcription (RT)-PCR] or viral culture.

Treatment is primarily supportive with careful attention to fluid and electrolyte balance. Ribavirin an antiviral agent in combination with supportive measures is the mainstay treatment of patients with lassa fever and possibly CCHF and when commenced early has proved effective.

Preventive efforts must concentrate on avoiding contact with host species. It is important for healthcare workers to use proper infection control precautions to prevent occupational exposure.