

UK Emergency Medical Team deployed to Eswatini to support coronavirus response

A team of medics from the UK's Emergency Medical Team (EMT) is deploying to Eswatini in southern Africa to provide support and specialist expertise in hospitals that are battling the coronavirus pandemic.

The team of 11, which includes 4 British medics, will fly from London Heathrow today (30 January 2021). They will provide urgent training and use their specialist expertise to provide clinical supervision to those treating patients critically ill with COVID-19.

A biomedical engineer will also train emaSwati staff on how to install, use and maintain critical care equipment, and support the distribution of key supplies including oxygen.

As of 27 January 2021, Eswatini has a total of 15,051 COVID-19 cases and 522 people have died from the illness. The country has seen a surge of new cases and fatalities since December 2020, with limited access to testing and treatment for much of the population.

Minister for Africa, James Duddridge, said:

Our UK Emergency Medical Team will save lives by using their world-leading specialist expertise and skills to make sure medics in Eswatini are best equipped to treat those seriously sick with coronavirus.

We stand by the people of Eswatini in the battle to bring this outbreak under control. This dreadful disease does not respect borders, and none of us are safe until we are all safe.

UK EMT Team Leader Andy Kent said:

UK-Med as part of the UK EMT is proud to be able to support the people of Eswatini in the response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Our team will be working alongside health care teams to support them with the treatment of increasing numbers of serious and critically-ill COVID-19 patients. They will also supervise and train Eswatini health staff, and help make sure that critical care equipment is functioning and used efficiently.

UK EMT Eswatini Medical Coordinator, David Anderson, said:

It is really important that the UK through the UK EMT continues to support other countries with their COVID-19 response. It is a fantastic opportunity to take our hard-won knowledge and work with the staff in Eswatini to support and improve their COVID-19 response.

The UK EMT is the UK's front-line response to a humanitarian crisis overseas and is able to rapidly deploy resources that include a fully equipped surgical field hospital when needed.

Last year, the UK EMT supported the World Health Organization and health ministries in the fight against coronavirus in deployments to Ghana, South Africa, Cambodia, Burkina Faso, Bangladesh, Chad, Zambia, Armenia and Lebanon.

In addition to supporting the immediate humanitarian response, the UK is at the forefront of efforts to drive unprecedented global collaboration and resourcing for the development and delivery of new vaccines, treatments and tests at the speed and scale required.

Notes to editors

- The EMT is a partnership of the UK's Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, emergency health NGO UK-Med, NGO Humanity & Inclusion, the UK Fire and Rescue Service and Palladium.
- The EMT's travel to support the Eswatini Minister of Health is considered essential business on behalf of the UK Government.