

UBC students hold flash mob in protest of Canada's ebola response



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Students from the School of Population and Public Health (SPPH) held a doctors-versus-Ebola virus flash mob race around campus on September 23. The event, principally organized by Nicole Markwick, an MP candidate at UBC, aimed to raise the profile of the Ebola issue and incite political action and a greater response from the Canadian government.

Participants met up in the lobby of the SPPH building, with one individual dressed up as the Ebola virus and the remaining participants dressed up as doctors in lab

coats and paper syringes. Armed with whistles and noisemakers to draw attention, the 'doctors' then proceeded to chase the 'Ebola virus' from the SUB to the REC centre and finally to Irving K. Barber, while periodically yelling "We're coming for you, Ebola!"

With major calls to action by the UN and Doctors Without Borders not being matched by international response, the event aimed to get the word out that Canada, with its ample financial and medical resources, needs to step up its game for dealing with this epidemic.

"In no way are we trying to trivialize [the issue] at all," said Nicole Markwick, the principal organizer of the event. "In fact, what we're trying to do is overcome this incredible apathy and media burnout by putting a different spin on [the issue.]"

Sally Lin, another organizer, also said that flash mob was intended to raise awareness of the urgency of the health crisis.

"More people are dying, and at a much faster pace, so we [Canada] need to move at a faster pace as well," said Lin.

Markwick and Lin have managed to get friends at McMaster and Guelph on board with holding their own flash mob race on Tuesday. They have also been trying to reach out to other universities across Canada.

"Ideally, what we want is to get the whole country involved, but people [at the various universities] are definitely aware and want to contribute," said Lin.

Suud Nahdi is a recent UBC graduate who played one of the doctors in the race. According to Nahdi, the event is supposed to start conversations about how to increase response to the disease.

“The event is about raising more awareness and showing people what they can do [to get more involved],” said Nahdi.

Lin also said that she hopes the event will inspire more people to protest for a bigger response to the outbreak.

“We want to get the momentum going so we’re starting this now, but it’s not the end,” said Lin. “It’s not over until the outbreak is over.” 