Mpox

The Mpox virus, formerly known as monkeypox, has caused several outbreaks in Africa over the years. The disease is caused by the monkeypox virus, which is related to the variola virus, the causative agent of smallpox. Mpox is primarily found in Central and West African countries and is transmitted to humans through close contact with an infected animal, human, or contaminated material.

Key Facts about Mpox Outbreaks in Africa:

1. Geographic Spread: The virus is endemic in some regions of Central and West Africa, particularly in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Nigeria, and Cameroon. Outbreaks in these areas are often linked to contact with wild animals, particularly rodents, which are considered the natural reservoir of the virus.
2. Symptoms: Mpox symptoms are similar to those of smallpox but are generally milder. They include fever, headache, muscle aches, backache, swollen lymph nodes, chills, and exhaustion. A distinctive feature is the rash that typically starts on the face and spreads to other parts of the body.
3. Transmission: The virus is transmitted through direct contact with the blood, bodily fluids, or cutaneous or mucosal lesions of infected animals or humans. Human-to-human transmission can also occur through respiratory droplets during prolonged face-to-face contact.
4. Recent Outbreaks: There have been sporadic outbreaks in Africa over the last few decades. The most significant recent outbreak was in Nigeria, starting in 2017, which has continued with cases reported almost every year since then. The outbreak has spread beyond Africa, leading to cases in Europe, North America, and other regions.
5. Vaccination and Treatment: There is no specific treatment for Mpox, but smallpox vaccines, antivirals, and vaccinia immune globulin can be used to control outbreaks. Vaccination campaigns, particularly using the JYNNEOS vaccine, have been implemented in response to outbreaks.

Challenges:

- Underreporting and Surveillance: One of the major challenges in Africa is underreporting due to weak surveillance systems. Many cases go undiagnosed or unreported, leading to an underestimation of the true burden of the disease.
- Healthcare Infrastructure: Limited healthcare infrastructure in many affected regions hampers the timely detection and response to outbreaks.

Global Response:

International health agencies like the World Health Organization (WHO) are involved in monitoring and responding to Mpox outbreaks in Africa. Efforts include improving surveillance, providing vaccines, and educating the public about the risks and prevention measures.