

First cholera case detected in Dominican Republic: official

November 17 2010

A first case of cholera has been detected in the Dominican Republic, which shares the island of Hispaniola with Haiti, Public Health Minister Bautista Rojas said Tuesday.

The patient is a 32-year-old Haitian-born man named Wilmont Lowel who is being treated in a hospital in the eastern town of Higüey, Rojas told reporters. His condition was said to be stable.

Lowel is a construction worker in Higüey who was home in Haiti on vacation before returning to the Dominican Republic November 12.

Dominican authorities had tightened border controls and stepped up health checks in an attempt to stop the disease from spreading from Haiti, where the death toll climbed past 1,000 on Tuesday.

Among the Dominican initiatives has been to search homes and detain people suspected of trying to get across the border without proper documentation and who may be infected. By Tuesday they had detained 170 people, authorities said.

"This really is a serious danger," Santos Ramirez of the Dominican Medical Board warned. "[Cholera](#) could become a pandemic if it spreads on this side of the island. We must avoid a disaster of that scope."

Higüey is located in the far eastern Dominican Republic, some 140 kilometers (87 miles) east of the capital Santo Domingo.

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