

Guinean Ebola survivor tells of being 'reborn'

April 11 2014, by Mouctar Bah

A woman struck down by the killer Ebola virus raging in Guinea has told of her joy at being "reborn" after pulling through against the odds.

The 27-year-old, giving her name as Fanta, recalled how she hovered for weeks between life and death battling the tropical bug, which has killed more than 100 people this year in the poverty-hit west African nation.

"To hear that I had a disease that could not be cured, I was so afraid... It is as if I have just been reborn," she told reporters on Thursday outside a treatment centre in the capital Conakry, days after medics had saved her life.

"The way people were looking at me, I knew I had this really dangerous illness but I'm fine now, thank God. I'm cured."

Guinea has been hit by the most severe strain of the virus, known as Zaire Ebola, which has had a fatality rate of up to 90 percent in past outbreaks, and for which there is no vaccine, cure or even specific treatment.

The World Health Organization (WHO) has described west Africa's first outbreak among humans as one of the most challenging since the virus emerged in 1976 in what is now the Democratic Republic of Congo.

It is also among the most deadly, with 158 people thought to have been infected and 101 deaths recorded in Guinea and 12 in neighbouring

Liberia.

A Guinean doctor working at the Conakry clinic, run by medical aid group Doctors Without Borders, described Fanta as "very strong" as she returned to thank them for saving her life.

"She has an extraordinary capacity for resistance. If she didn't have that, the treatment could not have saved her. That is why she is still here," the medic said.

Visitors abandoned other patients at the makeshift centre, in the grounds of a hospital, to crowd around Fanta as she spoke to reporters and glimpse close-up the woman they described as the "miracle that defeated the Ebola virus".

'She was very strong'

Onlookers bombarded medical staff with questions about how she had survived, an AFP reporter at the unit witnessed, while traffic police at a nearby crossroads left their posts to get a look at her.

Doctors Without Borders, known by its French initials MSF, says chances of surviving Ebola are greatly improved if patients are kept hydrated and receive treatment for secondary infections.

The WHO said on Thursday it was providing emergency training for 70 people who would fan out across Conakry to track people who have had close contact with Ebola patients.

The UN agency is also setting up a special alert and response operation centre within the Guinean health ministry and training staff at Guinea's main hospital and other health facilities.

The outbreak spread to the capital, a sprawling port city on the Atlantic coast and home to two million people, after first being reported in the country's remote southern forests.

Fanta is among only a handful of Ebola patients in Guinea to have recovered, most of them in Conakry, and she is expected to return to full health.

Various studies—including a paper published in the *New England Journal of Medicine* last year—have demonstrated some immunity in survivors from the particular strain to which they were exposed, but life-long protection has not been demonstrated.

"She was lucky, she was very strong. We have had patients who were cured after a hard fight for their bodies to recover, even when it didn't look like they were going to make it," said MSF nurse Catherine Jouvence.

© 2014 AFP

Citation: Guinean Ebola survivor tells of being 'reborn' (2014, April 11) retrieved 27 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2014-04-guinean-ebola-survivor-reborn.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.