

German experts say Ebola scare likely a stomach bug (Update)

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German infectious diseases experts said that a woman whose health condition had sparked an Ebola scare Tuesday likely suffered from a gastrointestinal infection instead.

Authorities rushed a 30-year-old woman of West African origin to hospital and quarantined her while closing down a Berlin public building where she had fainted, with several hundred people left inside.

However, the Charite hospital later issued a statement saying its experts "at the present time do not assume that it is Ebola".

"The patient has not been in an affected region. The doctors assume an infectious gastrointestinal disease. In order to formally rule out an Ebola infection, a blood test is of course being carried out."

The emergency response came after the woman collapsed inside an employment office building in the capital's northeastern district of Prenzlauer Berg, where police also sealed off the street outside.

Several people who had been with the woman inside the building were later also taken to hospital for testing.

Berlin fire department spokesman Rolf Erbe said that the authorities took such precautions because the patient came from a region of the world affected by a highly contagious disease.

"The patient was isolated inside the ambulance, the staff took the appropriate protective measures. An emergency medic, the public health officer, arrived and the necessary precautions were taken," he added.

Two previous Ebola scares in Germany in recent days, in Hamburg and Frankfurt, ended with authorities sounding the all-clear.

West Africa's Ebola epidemic, which has hit four nations since it broke out in Guinea early this year, is by far the deadliest since the virus was discovered four decades ago in what is now the Democratic Republic of Congo.

The UN World Health Organization said Tuesday the virus had killed 84 people in just three days, bringing the global death toll to 1,229, while confirmed, probable and suspect infections rose to 2,240.

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