

Liberia: Doctor given experimental Ebola drug dies (Update 2)

August 25 2014, by Jonathan Paye-Layleh



A woman sits with a baby, in the West Point area that has been hardest hit by the Ebola virus spreading in Monrovia, Liberia, Monday, Aug. 25, 2014. A Liberian doctor who was among three Africans to receive an experimental Ebola drug has died, the country's information minister said Monday. (AP Photo/Abbas Dulleh)

A Liberian doctor who received one of the last known doses of an experimental Ebola drug has died, officials said Monday, as Canada said it has yet to send out doses of a potential vaccine that the government is donating.

Ebola has left more than 1,400 people dead across West Africa, underscoring the urgency for developing potential ways to stop and treat the disease. However, health experts warn these options have not undergone the rigorous testing that usually takes place before drugs and vaccines are approved.

The experimental vaccines are at still at a Canadian laboratory, said Patrick Gaebel, spokesman for the Public Health Agency of Canada, who declined to speculate how many weeks it could be before those are given to volunteers.

"We are now working with the (World Health Organization) to address complex regulatory, logistical and ethical issues so that the vaccine can be safely and ethically deployed as rapidly as possible," Gaebel said.

Only six people in the world are known to have received the untested drug known as ZMapp. The small supply is now said to be exhausted and it is expected to be months before more can be produced by its U.S. maker.

Dr. Abraham Borbor, the deputy chief medical doctor at Liberia's largest hospital, had received ZMapp, after it was given to two Americans. After receiving medical care in the U.S. they later survived the virus that has killed about half of its victims.

A Spanish missionary priest infected with Ebola also received the treatment but died. There was no update given on the two other Liberians who took the last known available doses of ZMapp.



A man, left, renting out his wheelbarrow moves food goods for people in the West Point area that have been hardest hit by the Ebola virus spreading in Monrovia, Liberia, Monday, Aug. 25, 2014. A Liberian doctor who was among three Africans to receive an experimental Ebola drug has died, the country's information minister said Monday. (AP Photo/Abbas Dulleh)

Borbor "was showing signs of improvement but yesterday he took a turn for the worse," and died Sunday, Information Minister Lewis Brown told The Associated Press.

Ebola can cause a grisly death with bleeding from the eyes, mouth and ears. The virus can only be transmitted through direct contact with the bodily fluids of the sick or from touching victims' bodies, leaving doctors and other health care workers most vulnerable to contracting it.

Health experts caution that ZMapp had never been tested in humans

before and it is unclear whether it works. They note there is a huge gap between the treatment the two Americans got at an Atlanta hospital, where five infectious disease experts and 21 nurses provided rigorous care, and West Africa, where even such basics as sterile fluids can be in short supply.

It also probably helped that the two Americans were considered healthy and well-nourished before they were infected and received prompt care, experts say.

Meanwhile, the family of 29-year-old William Pooley, the first British citizen confirmed to be infected with Ebola, said he is receiving excellent care at an isolation ward in London's Royal Free Hospital after being evacuated from the capital of Sierra Leone.

"We could not ask for him to be in a better place," they said in a statement.



People wait for Liberian security forces to allow them to deliver foodstuff to friends and family members in the West Point area that has been hardest hit by the Ebola virus spreading in Monrovia, Liberia, Monday, Aug. 25, 2014. A Liberian doctor who was among three Africans to receive an experimental Ebola drug has died, the country's information minister said Monday. (AP Photo/Abbas Dulleh)

Pooley, a volunteer nurse, was flown back to Britain from Sierra Leone where he was working at an Ebola treatment center.

The World Health Organization is also in the process of trying to evacuate a Senegalese doctor who contracted Ebola while working in Sierra Leone, said WHO Assistant Director General, Dr. Keiji Fukuda on Monday.

The U.N. on Monday also spoke out against the limitations placed on flights into and out of the affected countries, saying they are having "adverse effects on efforts to control the disease," slowing aid organizations' work in sending personnel and equipment and contributing to the countries' "economic and diplomatic isolation."



Liberian security forces patrol the entrance to West Point that has been hardest hit by the Ebola virus spreading in Monrovia, Liberia, Monday, Aug. 25, 2014. A Liberian doctor who was among three Africans to receive an experimental Ebola drug has died, the country's information minister said Monday.(AP Photo/Abbas Dulleh)

"We shouldn't do anything that stokes fear and stigmatization," Stephane Dujarric, spokesman for the U.N. secretary-general, told reporters.

On Monday, Japan also said it is ready to provide a newly-developed anti-influenza drug as a possible treatment Ebola. The drug, with the brand name Avigan, was developed by Fujifilm subsidiary Toyama Chemical Co. to treat new and re-emerging influenza viruses, and has not been proven to be effective against Ebola.

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