

First US Ebola infection result of 'protocol breach'

October 13 2014, by Kerry Sheridan

A Texas health care worker has become the first person to contract Ebola on American soil, authorities confirmed Sunday, blaming a safety breach for the spread of the deadly disease.

The new Ebola patient, the second person infected outside Africa and the second diagnosed in the United States, had treated a man at a Dallas hospital who died of Ebola last week.

The infection deals a blow to global efforts to stem the epidemic, which has already claimed more than 4,000 lives, most of them in the hard-hit West African countries of Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone.

"This development is understandably disturbing news for the patient, the patient's family and colleagues and the greater Dallas community," the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said.

But the CDC insisted that any further spread into the community surrounding the hospital "can be prevented with proper public [health](#) measures."

Earlier, the agency's chief Thomas Frieden said it was clear that "at some point there was a breach in protocol and that breach in protocol resulted in this infection."

The CDC has launched an investigation and is hunting for more medical care workers who may have been exposed to the dangerous virus.

US President Barack Obama said that federal authorities should take "immediate additional steps" to make sure hospitals were ready to follow protocols designed for Ebola patients.

National Nurses United, the largest US organization of nurses, is now demanding protective equipment, including hazmat suits, and special training on how to treat Ebola.

"The time to act is long overdue," said executive director RoseAnn DeMoro.

Meanwhile in hardest-hit Liberia, [health care workers](#) plan to go on strike Monday to demand hazard pay for treating patients infected with the [deadly disease](#).

In Liberia alone, 95 [health care providers](#) have died from the tropical fever, out of 201 infected, according to the World Health Organization (WHO).

'Extensive contact'

The unidentified female caregiver at Texas Health Presbyterian Hospital in Dallas tested positive for Ebola on Saturday in a preliminary test and is currently in the hospital, in isolation and in stable condition.

"This is not news that should bring about panic," cautioned Dallas County Judge Clay Jenkins.

But Dan Varga, the chief clinical officer for Texas Health Resources, said the woman "was following full CDC precautions"—protective gear that would have included a mask, gown and gloves.

Frieden said the woman had "extensive contact" with Thomas Eric

Duncan, a Liberian man who was diagnosed with Ebola in the United States last month and died in Texas on Wednesday.

Frieden warned that other [health care](#) workers may have been exposed.

Duncan was believed to have been infected before he left Liberia and boarded a plane to visit family in Texas.

Meanwhile in Nebraska, a 33-year-old American photojournalist who became infected with Ebola while working in Liberia was continuing to show improvements, doctors said.

The latest case underlines United Nations fears and growing concerns in the United States about Ebola, for which there is no vaccine or widely available treatment.

JFK in New York on Saturday became the first airport in the United States to launch health screenings for travelers from West Africa. Other nations have instituted similar checks.

Passengers from West Africa arriving at John F Kennedy International Airport and other major US hubs in Atlanta, Chicago, Newark and Washington will have their temperatures taken, be screened for signs of illness and answer questions about possible exposure.

"Exit screening might not find every person with Ebola. However, it does not have to be perfect to help reduce the spread of Ebola," the CDC said.

Spanish nurse improves

In Spain, attention remained focused on 44-year-old Teresa Romero, the Madrid nurse who became the first person infected with the

hemorrhagic fever outside of Africa.

The Spanish crisis cell set up after she fell sick said there was "reason to hope" she could recover.

Romero is thought to have contracted the disease in late September in a Madrid hospital while caring for a Spanish missionary infected with Ebola in Africa who later died.

Romero has said she thought she might have developed Ebola after brushing her face with a glove—pointing to possible gaps in the safety protocols in hospitals treating Ebola patients.

Fifteen other people, mostly hospital staff as well as Romero's husband, are under observation at the Carlos III hospital where Romero is being treated.

The WHO reported 4,033 people have died from Ebola as of October 8 out of a total of 8,399 registered cases in seven countries.

Ebola causes fever, diarrhea, vomiting and in some cases internal and external bleeding. It is spread by contact with bodily fluids or exposure to contaminated objects such as needles.

The United Nations says aid pledges to fight the epidemic have fallen well short of the \$1 billion needed.

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