

Researchers to test whether Ebola survivors' blood can provide new treatment

October 23 2014

The University of Liverpool is part of an international research team that will assess whether the blood or plasma of Ebola survivors can be used to treat Ebola patients in West Africa.

The research team will receive over £2million from the European Union (EU) to evaluate the safety and efficacy of blood and [plasma](#) donated by people who have recovered from Ebola.

Using blood or plasma from recovered patients was identified by the World Health Organisation (WHO) as one of the most promising strategies for treating the disease and is a priority for urgent evaluation.

A person who has survived Ebola has antibodies in their blood which have developed specifically to deal with the virus. As a result of the current outbreak, there are also substantial numbers of Ebola survivors to donate blood.

Blood and plasma from recovered Ebola patients has been used in a limited number of patients previously. For example, during the 1995 Ebola outbreak in Kikwit, in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), seven out of eight patients receiving convalescent whole blood survived.

However, whether this was due to the transfusions or to other factors is unclear. There is an urgent need to evaluate this therapy in carefully designed studies according to the highest ethical and scientific standards.

The use of convalescent blood and plasma will be trailed in Guinea, West Africa, in November by the consortium led by Dr Calum Semple from the University of Liverpool's Institute of Child Health based at Alder Hey Children's Hospital and Dr Johan van Griensven of the Prince Leopold Institute of Tropical Medicine (ITM) Antwerp.

Dr Semple said: "Convalescent plasma therapy is a medical intervention which has been used for a long time to treat other diseases safely. We want to find out whether the Ebola plasma will work, is safe and can be used to reduce the number of deaths in the present outbreak."

Johan van Griensven added: "Ebola survivors contributing to curb the epidemic by donating [blood](#) could reduce fear of the disease and improve their acceptance in the communities."

The project is funded by the European Union and supported and guided by the WHO, the International Severe Acute Respiratory and Emerging Infection Consortium (ISARIC) with additional support from The Wellcome Trust enabling unparalleled international collaboration across the public, private and not-for-profit sectors to tackle the Ebola emergency.

The research consortium involves the Institute of Tropical Medicine in Antwerp, the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, the University of Oxford, Aix-Marseille University, the French Blood Transfusion Service, Institute Pasteur, Institute National de la Sante et de La Recherche Medicale (INSERM), the National Blood Transfusion Centre in Conakry (Guinea), the Institut National de Recherche Biomédicale in Kinshasha (DRC), and the Belgian Red Cross-Flanders.

Provided by University of Liverpool

Citation: Researchers to test whether Ebola survivors' blood can provide new treatment (2014, October 23) retrieved 27 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2014-10-ebola-survivors-blood-treatment.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.