

Texas Ebola patient gets experimental drug (Update)

October 6 2014, by Kerry Sheridan

A Liberian man diagnosed with Ebola in Texas was given an experimental drug for the first time, officials said Monday as the White House mulled tougher airport screening at home and abroad.

Thomas Eric Duncan was given the investigational medication, brincidofovir, on Saturday, the day his condition worsened from serious to critical, said Texas Health Presbyterian Hospital Dallas.

The medication is made by the North Carolina-based pharmaceutical company Chimerix, and until now had never been tried in humans with Ebola, the company said.

However, it has been tested in about 1,000 people against adenovirus and cytomegalovirus.

The drug "works by keeping viruses from creating additional copies of themselves," Chimerix said.

Duncan is the first person to be diagnosed with Ebola in the United States, and he is believed to have become infected while in Liberia.

West Africa is currently battling the largest outbreak of Ebola in history, with more than 3,400 dead from the hemorrhagic virus since the start of the year.

Meanwhile, President Barack Obama was briefed by senior health and

security advisors about the situation in Texas and US preparedness against Ebola.

Obama said the chances of a US Ebola outbreak were "extraordinarily low" but vowed to press world leaders to step up the global fight against the deadly epidemic in West Africa.

"We have not seen other countries step up as aggressively as they need to," Obama said.

"I'm going to be putting a lot of pressure on my fellow heads of state and government around the world to make sure that they are doing everything that they can to join us in this effort."

He said the United States is considering tougher airport screening to ward against the spread of cases by airline travelers.

"We're also going to be working on protocols to do additional passenger screening both at the source and here in the United States," Obama told reporters.

In Nebraska, a US photojournalist who tested positive for Ebola in Liberia arrived at a hospital and was able to walk off the airplane that carried him.

"We are really happy that his symptoms are not extreme yet," Ashoka Mukpo's mother, Diana, told reporters, adding that he was feverish and nauseous.

He is being treated at the Nebraska Medical Center, the same facility that treated American missionary doctor Rick Sacra last month.

Sacra also came down with Ebola in Liberia and was treated with the

Canadian firm Tekmira's Ebola drug, TKM-Ebola, as well as serum from another doctor, Kent Brantly, who had Ebola and recovered.

Brantly was treated with a drug called ZMapp, which is hard to make, and there are no doses left.

There is no market-approved drug for treating Ebola yet, and no vaccine to prevent it.

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