

British Ebola nurse 'stabilised'

January 5 2015

A British nurse hospitalised with Ebola is in a critical but stable condition, a week after she was diagnosed with the deadly virus, Britain's health minister said Monday.

Nurse Pauline Cafferkey, who is being treated at London's Royal Free hospital, contracted the disease while working at a British-built Ebola treatment centre in Sierra Leone.

"As has been reported, Pauline's condition has deteriorated to a critical state although she stabilised yesterday and continues to receive the best possible care," Health Minister Jeremy Hunt told British lawmakers.

He commended the "exceptional bravery and compassion" of Cafferkey and her colleagues in the battle against Ebola in the west African country, where she had been working as a volunteer with the charity Save the Children.

Hunt said Ebola screening procedures at London's Heathrow airport—described by a doctor travelling home with Cafferkey as "shambolic"—were deemed to be working well.

Save the Children said Monday it had launched an investigation into how Cafferkey contracted the virus while working in Kerry Town, not far from Sierra Leone's capital Freetown.

The Scottish nurse was diagnosed in Glasgow on December 29, a day after flying home, and transferred to the Royal Free, which has the only

isolation ward in Britain equipped for Ebola patients.

Doctors said she would be treated with blood plasma from an Ebola survivor containing virus-fighting antibodies as well as an experimental anti-viral drug.

"Because of this very serious event we have put in an extraordinary review to ensure that we do everything, leave no stone unturned to, as far as possible, identify the source of this infection," the charity's Sierra Leone director Rob MacGillivray told the BBC.

The review will look at training, safety protocols, how protective equipment is used, and working practices, the charity said.

The Ebola virus has killed 8,153 people and infected more than 20,000 in the past year, mainly in Liberia, Guinea and Sierra Leone.

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