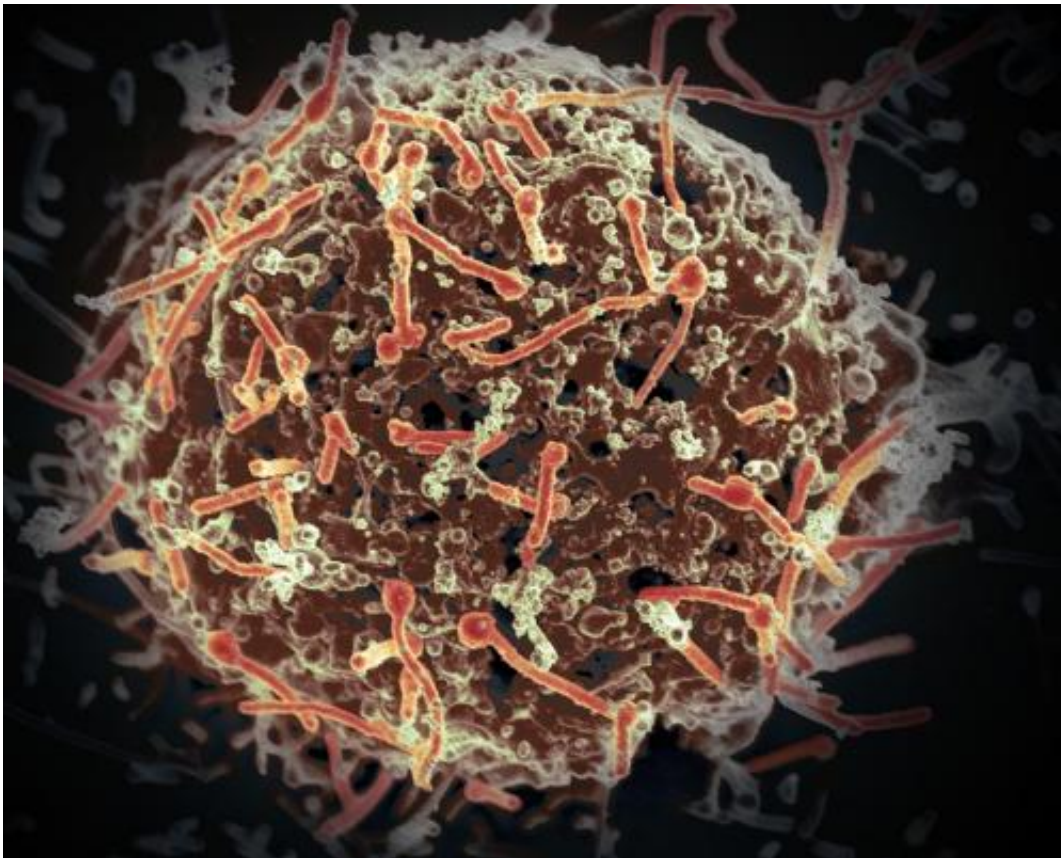


WHO gives green light to 15-minute Ebola test

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The Ebola virus, isolated in November 2014 from patient blood samples obtained in Mali. The virus was isolated on Vero cells in a BSL-4 suite at Rocky Mountain Laboratories. Credit: NIAID

The World Health Organization (WHO) announced Friday it had approved a 15-minute test for Ebola that should prove a fast and rugged

tool in countries hit by the disease.

The test is a little less accurate than the so-called gold standard of lab assessment, but does not need electricity or highly trained personnel to use it, WHO spokesman Tarik Jasarevic said.

"Yesterday WHO assessed and listed (the) first antigen rapid test kit as being eligible for procurement to Ebola affected countries," Jasarevic told reporters.

"This is the first rapid antigen test that gives the results in 15 minutes," Jasarevic said.

He described it as "a breakthrough" because it takes so little time.

"Where possible, obviously results from this antigen [rapid test](#) should be confirmed by testing by blood sample using normal PCR tests," he added, referring a DNA analysis to detect the disease.

The test, which is manufactured by the US firm Corgenix, "can correctly identify 92 percent of Ebola infected patients," he said.

It entails putting a drop of blood on a paper strip, which then shows positive or negative, like [pregnancy test](#).

WHO's evaluation means that the test meets benchmarks for quality, safety and performance, he said.

The WHO spokesman gave no details as to where and when the test would be introduced, but did indicate it would likely be bought by a UN agency.

Health watchdogs are keen on a fast test because the current PCR test,

which looks for telltale genetic signatures, can take up to 24 hours.

A simple but reliable test would help doctors in the field to quarantine people likely to have the virus and airports to test passengers before they get on a flight.

"The new [antigen test](#) is not a game-changer, but it is another useful tool in the fight against Ebola," said Ben Neuman, a virologist at Britain's University of Reading.

"The new test could help to quickly confirm outbreaks in remote areas without the need to send samples to a testing clinic and wait for results," he told the Science Media Centre (SMC) in London.

"The new [test](#) isn't about saving the lives of infected people, but it can help in the long run by making it easier and quicker to detect Ebola outbreaks."

Other prototype fast-track tests have been devised by scientists in Britain and France.

As of February 15, WHO said 23,253 people had been infected with Ebola and 9,380 had died, the vast majority of them in Guinea, Sierre Leone and Liberia.

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