

Liberia: Eight hospital staff under observation in Ebola scare

February 21 2015, by Jonathan Paye-Layleh

Eight health workers at a hospital in Liberia's capital have been sent home for observation after coming into contact with a patient who later tested positive for Ebola, the country's assistant health minister said Saturday.

The incident occurred at the S.D. Cooper Hospital in Monrovia's Sinkor neighborhood, Tolbert Nyenswah said. The patient, a woman, was transferred to the hospital from a smaller hospital, and staff began treating her before an Ebola test was conducted, Nyenswah said.

The health workers will be under observation for 21 days and will not be coming into work during that period, he said.

"You cannot be under observation and then at the same time go to work to expose people. No way," he said.

There are now eight patients who have tested positive for Ebola being cared for at treatment centers in Liberia, Nyenswah said. Seven of those are in Monrovia, while another is in the town of Kakata, 35 miles northeast of the capital.

That total is a far cry from last year when the West African nation was the center of the worst Ebola outbreak in history.

Liberia has recorded more than 9,000 confirmed, suspected and probable Ebola cases and 3,900 deaths, according to the World Health

Organization. However, WHO's most recent update reported only two new cases in the previous week, and schools began reopening earlier this week.

On Friday, President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf ordered officials to lift a curfew put in place six months ago and to reopen the country's land border crossings.

Sirleaf is preparing to meet with President Barack Obama next week at the White House. In an interview with state radio, she said she hopes to resume overseas travel after months of staying in Liberia and focusing on the outbreak.

"I feel that I can now take a little bit of a break. But that break is also work-related," she said, noting that she also planned to speak about Ebola at a conference in Brussels in March.

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