

Liberia investigates how latest Ebola patient got infected

March 21 2015, by Jonathan Paye-Layleh

Liberian officials were investigating Saturday how the country's latest Ebola patient became infected, after weeks with no cases of the disease in the country.

Liberia has seen the most deaths in the Ebola outbreak, with more than 4,200 of the more than 10,000 dead across West Africa. Since Liberia discharged its last case on March 5, it was counting down the 42 days that a country must wait in order to be declared Ebola-free.

But on Friday, officials said a new patient tested positive. In a worrying sign, she doesn't seem to be linked to any of the people on an Ebola contacts list and says she has not traveled recently to the neighboring infected countries of Sierra Leone and Guinea.

"If she has not travelled out of the country . there is no contact, there is no source," said Dr. Francis Katch, acting head of the Liberia Ebola Case Management Team.

He said authorities were considering the possibility that she had a visitor from outside Liberia who infected her or that she had sex with a survivor. The Ebola virus can be found in the semen of survivors for up to three months, and health authorities recommend that survivors abstain from sex during that period.

Authorities are still compiling a list of people who came into contact with the patient, who is a local businesswoman and thus met lots of

people in her community, said Elizabeth Hamann of the International Rescue Committee, which is helping to manage the hospital where the woman first sought care. Contacts of people who are sick with Ebola are quarantined and monitored for symptoms.

Although hopes were high that Liberia had beaten Ebola, officials know that until neighboring Sierra Leone and Guinea also stamp out the disease, Liberia will remain at risk.

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