

UK nurse cured of Ebola after receiving new treatment (Update)

March 27 2015

A British army reservist who contracted Ebola while working as a volunteer nurse in Sierra Leone has fully recovered after becoming the first patient in the world to receive an experimental new treatment.

Anna Cross, 25, was discharged on Friday from the Royal Free Hospital in London where she was taken earlier this month after being evacuated from west Africa on a military plane.

"She has completely recovered from Ebola, she is now free of the virus," her doctor, Michael Jacobs, said.

"Anna is the first patient in the world to have received a new special treatment for Ebola, MIL 77," he said, adding: "The treatment went very well, it caused no side effects that we could elicit."

He said the new treatment was produced in China and was similar to ZMapp, a cocktail of three antibodies that cling to the virus and inhibit its reproduction.

Cross, dressed in her army uniform, expressed her gratitude to the team that treated her, saying: "Thanks to them I'm alive".

"I need to recover. I need to be fit enough to join the military again. It's going to take me a long time," she added.

Cross, who works as a nurse in the state-run National Health Service,

was exposed to the virus while treating patients but said she did not know exactly when this might have happened.

She was the third British healthcare worker to contract Ebola in Sierra Leone.

The two previous ones—nurses William Pooley and Pauline Cafferkey—both recovered after being treated at the Royal Free.

The hospital has a high-level isolation unit geared up to treat Ebola patients under quarantine.

Jonathan Ball, professor of molecular virology at Nottingham University in central England, said more trials of MIL 77 were needed to know for sure whether it had cured Cross.

"She was given an experimental drug, but it is impossible to say whether or not this directly contributed to her clearing the virus," he said.

"In order to know whether a drug does work we need experimental trials and thankfully trials of various drugs are underway in west Africa, where the Ebola virus is still doggedly clinging on."

Since the outbreak began in December 2013, 24,753 people in nine countries have been infected with the virus, and 10,236 of them have died, according to the latest figures.

All but 15 of those deaths have occurred in Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone.

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