

DR Congo rolls out prototype Ebola drugs as death toll rises to 67

August 25 2018



A scanning electron micrograph of Ebola virus budding from a cell (African green monkey kidney epithelial cell line). Credit: NIAID

An outbreak of Ebola in eastern DR Congo has killed 67 people this month, authorities said Saturday, as they roll out a battery of new drugs to tackle the virus amid concerns it has spread to a rebel-encircled area.

A total of 105 cases have been reported since the flare-up of Ebola

began on August 1 in Mangina in North Kivu province, according to the health ministry, out of which 77 have been confirmed by laboratory tests.

It said 11 people have recovered from the virus and 67 had died.

Health minister Oly Ilunga Kalenga travelled to Mangina on Thursday and saw two patients being discharged after they were treated with a new prototype treatment called mAb114.

"These two people are among the first 10 patients to have received the therapeutic molecule mAb114," the ministry said in a statement.

Developed in the United States, it is the first therapeutic drug to be used in an active Ebola epidemic in the DRC.

Earlier this week, the health ministry said four other experimental drugs had been approved for treating infected patients.

On Friday, the World Health Organization warned that signs the virus had spread to the city of Oicha in North Kivu could frustrate efforts to contain the virus.

While Oicha itself is not under rebel control, WHO emergency response chief Peter Salama said the city was entirely surrounded by territory held by a feared Ugandan insurgent group known as the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF).

Large numbers of civilians have been killed in unrest around Oicha, while aid workers, priests and government employers are currently being held hostage there by insurgents.

On Friday, army troops came under attack in Beni, at the heart of the

Ebola-affected region, military and civil sources said. The assault was blamed on ADF rebels.

No official toll were provided but locals contacted by AFP on Saturday spoke of around 10 soldiers killed.

The current Ebola outbreak is the 10th to strike the DRC since 1976, when the disease was first identified and named after a river in the north of the country.

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