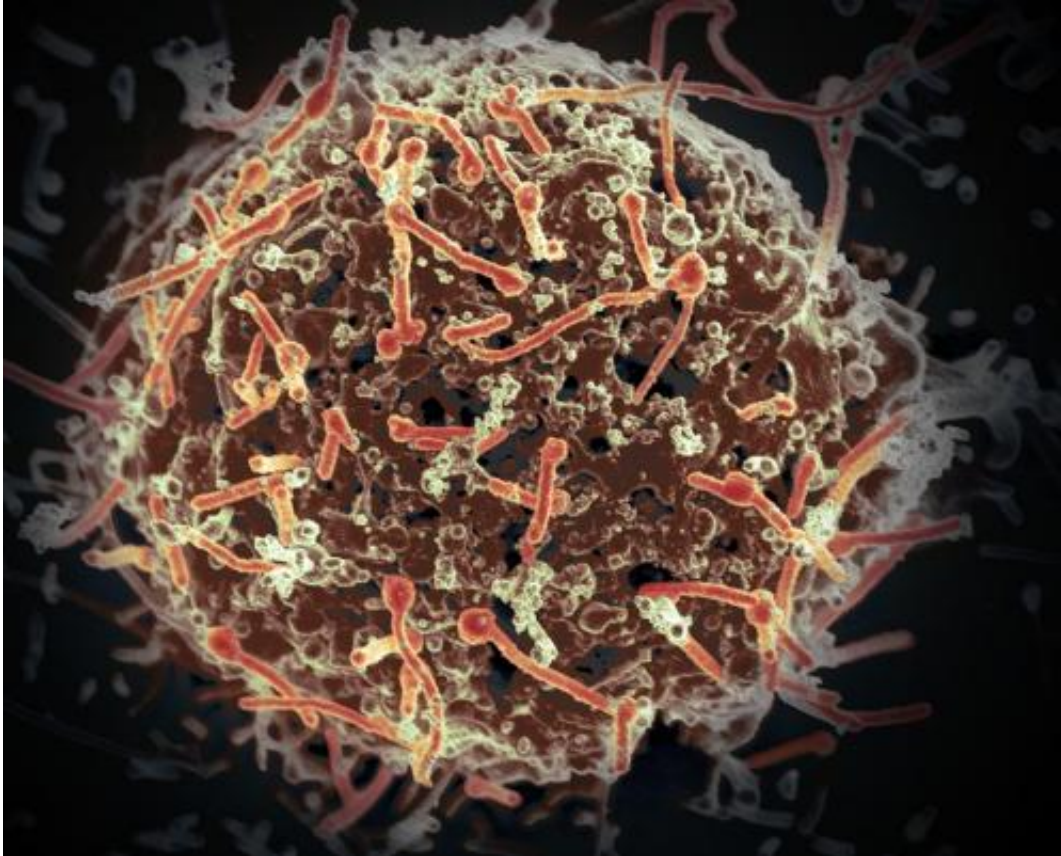


Guinea to declare end to Ebola epidemic

June 17 2021



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

Guinea will announce an end to its Ebola epidemic this weekend, the health minister said Thursday, hailing the rapid response to the second outbreak of the disease in the country.

Speaking during a webinar hosted by the World Health Organization (WHO), Health Minister Remy Lamah said the viral epidemic will be declared over on Saturday—barring the discovery of new cases.

"The availability of epidemic treatment centres built across the country has allowed us to quickly treat suspected and confirmed patients," he said.

Guinea, a poor West African nation of 13 million people, announced an Ebola outbreak on February 14.

It was second such outbreak in the country since the devastating 2013-2016 Ebola epidemic in West Africa, which left 11,300 dead in Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone.

Ebola causes severe fever and, in the worst cases, unstoppable bleeding.

It is transmitted through close contact with bodily fluids, and people who live with or care for patients are most at risk.

Guinea reacted quickly to this year's outbreak, however, building on its previous experience of fighting the disease.

Among other measures, the country launched an Ebola vaccination campaign this year with the help of the WHO.

Matshidiso Moeti, the WHO's regional director for Africa, said during the webinar that Guinea had contained Ebola and prevented it from spreading abroad "thanks to new innovations and lessons learned".

Lamah also said that unlike in the past, [health workers](#) treating Ebola patients did not contract the disease.

Faster, smarter

Five people have died of Ebola virus in Guinea this year, according to the WHO.

The first confirmed victim was a 51-year-old nurse, who died in late January.

Two of the nurse's brothers who attended her funeral on February 1 also died, a health official previously told AFP.

Guinea's health agency declared an epidemic later that month.

According to Moeti, health officials sprung into action by quickly testing suspected Ebola cases and tracing the people they had come into contact with.

The WHO and Guinea's government then launched a vaccination campaign nine days after the declaration of an epidemic.

"We have become faster, more efficient and smarter in the fight against Ebola," she said.

The total number of people infected this year is uncertain, but the WHO has pointed to 16 confirmed cases, and seven probable cases.

Guinea will be able to declare itself free of Ebola after 42 days of not recording a fresh infection.

That threshold will be reached on Friday, according to the WHO office in Guinea.

"We are preparing in the coming days to notify you of the end of the

circulation of the Ebola virus," Health Minister Lamah said.

He added that a ceremony is already planned for Saturday in Nzerekore, the forested region in the southeast of Guinea where Ebola re-emerged this year.

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