

UN in Haiti sees jump in cholera cases

April 3 2012, By TRENTON DANIEL , Associated Press

(AP) -- Haiti is seeing a jump in the number of cholera cases as the Caribbean nation heads into the annual rainy season, a United Nations humanitarian agency said Tuesday.

The U.N.'s Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs said in a monthly bulletin that the new cholera cases were found in the western and northern parts of the country and that Haitian [health officials](#) recorded 77 new cases a day for the whole country in early March, when the rains began.

Medical teams have been deployed to stem the spread of cholera but their effectiveness has been hampered in part by little coordination and an absence of salaries paid to people working in cholera treatment centers run by Haitian authorities, the U.N. bulletin said.

The day-to-day operations of the Haitian government have been largely been put on hold after Prime Minister Garry Conille suddenly resigned in February because of clashes with President Michel Martelly. Martelly named his foreign affairs minister, Laurent Lamothe, as his next pick but it's unclear when Parliament will vote on Lamothe's candidacy.

The new cholera cases come after a steady decline since June of last year when [aid workers](#) saw peaks of more than 1,000 cases on certain days.

The Boston-based group Partners in Health said it saw the number of cholera cases nearly triple from almost 19,000 in April 2011 to more than 50,000 two months later.

The same group wants to introduce a [cholera vaccine](#) to Haiti but its distribution is on hold as an ethics committee studies the program.

The disease, now the largest [cholera outbreak](#) in the world, has killed more than 7,000 people and sickened another 530,000, health officials say. The disease was likely introduced by a U.N. peacekeeping unit from Nepal, where the disease is endemic, several months after the January 2010 earthquake.

Cholera is caused by a bacteria found in [contaminated water](#) or food, and can kill people within hours through dehydration. It is easily treatable if caught in time.

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