

Two Ebola patients in Congo 'cured' with drugs, say doctors

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Esperance Nabintu and her one-year-old son, Ebenezer Fataki, after the two had been declared cured of Ebola, in Goma, Congo Tuesday, Aug. 13, 2019. The two were treated with new anti-Ebola drugs by top doctors who said that the disease can be cured if people seek proper care. (AP Photo/Justin Katumwa)

Two Ebola patients who were treated with new drugs in the city of Goma in eastern Congo have been declared "cured" and returned to their home.

Top doctors fighting Ebola quickly used the case on Tuesday to press the message that people can recover from the potentially deadly disease if they seek proper care.

Ebola is dangerous but it is also curable with correct treatment, said Dr. Jean-Jacques Muyembe, director of Congo's National Institute for Biomedical Research.

"Ebola kills quickly and Ebola heals quickly. That's the message," said Muyembe, at a press conference in Goma.

"These cases were detected very quickly. The

husband was infected, he was at home for 10 days and his wife and son were infected," said Muyembe. "As soon as the response teams detected these cases, they brought them here to the treatment center. We gave them treatment that is effective and here in a short time both are cured."

Muyembe said two new drugs "are now be used to treat Ebola patients because, according to the studies and the results we obtained in the lab, these are the two drugs that are effective."

Muyembe and other scientists announced this week that preliminary results from two trials in Congo found two drugs—made by Regeneron and the U.S. National Institutes of Health—seem to be saving lives. Researchers said more study is needed to nail down how well those two compounds work. The drugs are antibodies that block Ebola. In the trial, significantly fewer people died among those given the Regeneron drug or the NIH's, about 30%, compared to those who received another treatment.



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Esperance Nabintu rejoiced that she and her young son had survived Ebola.

"May the Lord be praised, I thank the Lord very much. I and my child were sick with Ebola, but God has just healed us.

"My brothers, we must not doubt. Ebola exists," said Nabintu, whose husband was the second Ebola victim to die in Goma. No other Ebola death has been detected since then.

After a public announcement that Nabintu and her son, Ebenezer Fataki, 1, had recovered from Ebola, the response team accompanied the two former patients their home in the Kiziba area, where the medical team educated the residents about proper Ebola treatment.

There is less danger that Ebola will spread through Goma, the capital of North Kivu province with more than 2 million inhabitants, because about 200 contacts and suspected cases have been identified and have received proper medication, said Muyembe. He said people arriving in Goma are being monitored at the city's entry points.

"People who come from Beni and Butembo (nearby cities where there are many Ebola cases) must be carefully examined," said Muyembe. "All of the 200 contacts we are following are doing well. We are waiting until the end of the 21-day surveillance period. We are at day 13, so there are still 8 days to go before we can say that Goma has won against Ebola."

Health officials have also vaccinated tens of thousands of people in Congo and surrounding countries in an attempt to stop the outbreak, but the virus has now continued to spread for more than a year. Response efforts have been repeatedly hampered by attacks on health workers and continuing mistrust among the affected communities; many people in the region don't believe the virus is real and choose to stay at home when they fall ill, infecting those who care for them.

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