

Are Rumors True? Does Pope Francis Have a Brain Tumor?

The Vatican denied an Italian media report on Wednesday that Pope Francis has a benign brain tumor, calling the article “gravely irresponsible and unworthy of attention.”

Francis later held his weekly general audience before tens of thousands of people in St. Peter’s Square and was due to return to a three-week gathering of Roman Catholic bishops from around the world, which he has been attending daily.

The newspaper Quotidiano Nazionale, a national paper based in central Italy, reported on its front page on Wednesday that a Japanese doctor and his team had secretly flown from Tuscany to the Vatican on a helicopter bearing the Vatican’s white-and-yellow flag to examine the pope “some months ago.”

The article, under the headline “The Pope is Sick,” said the Argentine pontiff was diagnosed with “a small dark spot on the brain,” but that it was curable without surgery.

“The circulation of entirely unfounded news regarding the health of the Holy Father by an Italian newspaper is gravely irresponsible and unworthy of attention,” chief Vatican spokesman Father Federico Lombardi said in a statement.

“Furthermore, as is clearly evident, the pope is carrying out his very intense activity in a totally normal way,” he said.

A spokeswoman for the San Rossore clinic, from where the newspaper said the helicopter took off, said she could not comment on the report and directed inquiries to the director. The director’s office said he was not available.

Since the start of the year, Francis has made trips to Asia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Latin America, the United States, and a

number of visits in Rome and Italy.

In a television interview last March on the second anniversary of his election, Francis said he believed his pontificate would be short and that he would be ready to resign like his predecessor Pope Benedict rather than leading the Church for life.

The pope has appeared to be in good health in recent months apart from some leg pain due to sciatica, for which he undergoes regular physical therapy in the Vatican.

The pope lost part of one lung to disease when he was a young man. {eoa}

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