

Ebola Patient Coming to US as Aid Workers' Health Worsens

A U.S. aid worker who was infected with the deadly Ebola virus while working in west Africa will be flown to the United States to be treated in a high-security ward at Emory University Hospital in Atlanta, hospital officials said on Thursday.

The aid worker, whose name has not been released, will be moved in the next several days to a special isolation unit at Emory. The unit was set up in collaboration with the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

CDC spokeswoman Barbara Reynolds said her agency was working with the U.S. State Department to facilitate the transfer.

Reynolds said the CDC was not aware of any Ebola patient ever being treated in the United States, but five people in the past decade have entered the country with either Lassa Fever or Marburg Fever, hemorrhagic fevers that are similar to Ebola.

News of the transfer follows reports of the declining health of two infected U.S. aid workers, Dr. Kent Brantly and missionary Nancy Writebol, who contracted Ebola while working in Liberia on behalf of North Carolina-based Christian relief groups Samaritan's Purse and SIM.

CNN and ABC News reported that an American infected with Ebola was to be flown to the United States. CNN said there were to be two patients and identified them as Brantly and Writebol. Reuters could not independently confirm the reports.

Amber Brantly, the wife of Dr. Brantly, said in a statement: "I remain hopeful and believing that Kent will be healed from this dreadful disease."

Earlier on Thursday, White House spokesman Josh Earnest said the State Department was working with the CDC on medical evacuations of infected American humanitarian aid workers.

The outbreak in west Africa is the worst in history, having killed more than 700 people since Thursday, the CDC issued a travel advisory urging people to avoid all non-essential travel to Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone, the epicenter of the outbreak.

Brantly and Writebol "were in stable but grave" condition as of early Thursday morning, the relief organizations said. A spokeswoman for the groups could not confirm whether the patient being transferred to Emory was one of their aid workers.

CDC Director Dr. Thomas Frieden said in a conference call that transferring gravely ill patients has the potential to do more harm than good.

Meanwhile, the National Institutes of Health plans in mid-September to begin testing an experimental Ebola vaccine on people after seeing encouraging results in pre-clinical trials on monkeys, Dr. Anthony Fauci, director of the NIH's allergy and infectious diseases unit, said in an email.

In its final stages, Ebola causes external and internal bleeding, vomiting and diarrhea. About 60 percent of people infected in the current outbreak are dying from the illness.

Writebol, 59, received an experimental drug doctors hope will improve her health, SIM said. Brantly, 33, received a unit of blood from a 14-year-old boy who survived Ebola with the help of Brantly's medical care, said Franklin Graham, president of Samaritan's Purse.

Frieden could not comment on the specifics of either treatment but said: "We have reviewed the evidence of the treatments out there and don't find any treatment that has proven

effectiveness against Ebola.”

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