

Beat: Health

Ebola death toll reaches 87 as Guinea reports new cases

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USPA News - Three more people in the African nation of Guinea are believed to have died of Ebola, raising the total number of deaths from the ongoing outbreak in the region to at least 87, international health authorities said on Wednesday. Five new cases were reported.

The World Health Organization (WHO) said on Wednesday that five new cases of Ebola had been recorded in Guinea over the previous 24 hours. The new cases put the number of suspected and confirmed cases in the ongoing Ebola outbreak in Guinea at 127, including 83 deaths. No new cases were reported in Liberia and Sierra Leone, where authorities have said four people died of suspected Ebola. A situation report published on Wednesday said the case fatality rate stood at 65 percent, with all age groups affected though many are adults between the ages of 15 and 59. Among the suspected and confirmed cases in Guinea, 12 - including four deaths - have been reported in the capital Conakry. Doctors Without Borders (MSF) on Monday described the Ebola outbreak as an "unprecedented epidemic," but WHO spokesman Gregory Härtl said on Tuesday that the outbreak was localized in southeastern Guinea and that it fitted the patterns of all previous Ebola outbreaks. He also said it was not unusual to see cases in a capital city, as patients tend to travel to big cities in search of more effective medical treatment. But asked whether MSF was "exaggerating" the situation, Härtl emphasized that MSF had been "absolutely key" in the response to the Ebola outbreak. He said the key priority at the moment is to stop chain transmission and tracing all contacts, as contacts need to be monitored for a period of 21 days to ensure they do not inadvertently spread the disease to someone else. Ebola is a highly infectious disease and kills its victims in a very short time, though the virus can easily be confused with many other diseases. The signs and symptoms include high grade fever, vomiting, diarrhea, abdominal pain, headache, measles-like rash, red eyes, and in some cases bleeding from body openings. The virus, for which there is no cure or vaccine, can spread through direct contact with body fluids such as saliva, blood, stool, vomit, urine, and sweat but also through soiled linen used by an infected person. It can also spread by using skin piercing instruments previously used by an infected person or by touching the dead body of a person who died of Ebola. The first outbreak of Ebola in 1976 in Zaire - which is now the Democratic Republic of Congo - was also the deadliest, killing at least 280 people and sickening 38 others, putting the fatality rate at 88 percent. The Ebola outbreak in Uganda in 2000 was the largest ever recorded, killing 224 people and sickening at least 201 others.

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