

Beat: Health

Toronto-area hospital quarantines patient with Ebola-like symptoms

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USPA News - A man who recently traveled to Nigeria was quarantined at a Toronto-area hospital on Friday after he developed fever and other flu-like symptoms, which could indicate an infection with the deadly Ebola virus but also many other diseases, health officials said. The man, whose identity was not released, recently returned to Canada from Nigeria after which he developed symptoms such as fever, headache, malaise and other flu-like symptoms.

He went to the emergency room at Brampton Civic Hospital in Brampton, which is just outside Toronto, on Friday. Cara Francis, a spokeswoman for the William Osler Health System, said medical experts were working closely with Peel Public Health to confirm a diagnosis. "As a precautionary measure, Osler put in heightened infection control measures in the emergency department including isolating the patient," she said. While the patient's symptoms could indicate an infection with Ebola, the man's symptoms could also indicate many other diseases, such as malaria. But Nigeria has recently become affected by the Ebola outbreak which originated in other West African countries, and a number of new cases in Nigeria's largest city of Lagos have prompted President Goodluck Jonathan to declare a state of emergency. "I am aware that we are currently testing a patient who recently traveled from West Africa," said Ontario Health Minister Eric Hoskins. "With the experience and lessons learned from the SARS epidemic, our hospitals have sophisticated infection control systems and procedures to protect health providers, patients, and all Ontarians, and are fully equipped to deal with any potential cases of Ebola." Francis also noted that the William Osler Health System regularly treats patients with similar symptoms because of its proximity to Toronto Pearson International Airport. The Ebola outbreak in West Africa, which began in Guinea in March and has since spread to Liberia, Sierra Leone and Nigeria, has so far infected 1,779 people, including 961 people who have died of the illness. The current outbreak features the Zaire strain of the Ebola virus, which is considered the most aggressive and deadly strain, having killed up to 9 out of 10 infected in previous outbreaks. Ebola is a highly infectious disease and kills its victims in a very short time, and the ongoing outbreak is the worst ever of its kind. 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 body of a person who died of Ebola. It is not airborne. The first outbreak of Ebola in 1976 in Zaire - which is now the Democratic Republic of Congo - had been the deadliest until the current outbreak, killing at least 280 people and sickening 38 others, putting the fatality rate at 88 percent. The Ebola outbreak in Uganda in 2000 had long been the largest ever recorded, killing 224 people and sickening at least 201 others.

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