

No new cases of Marburg registered

By Cecilia Okoth

No new cases of the Marburg Virus Disease (MVD) have been registered since its outbreak two weeks ago, the Ministry of Health has said.

The deadly disease, first reported in Kween district, Eastern Uganda has so far claimed three lives with two confirmed cases and another probable one.

Dr. Henry Mwebesa, the acting director general of health services, yesterday said they, together with other partners, dispatched a rapid response team to the affected districts of Kween, Kapchorwa and the rest of the Sebei sub-region.

Kapchorwa was brought on board after one of the confirmed cases; a 52-year-old was referred to Kapchorwa hospital from Kapraron Health Centre IV in Kween district, having contracted Marburg.

Preliminary investigations indicated that prior to her death, the woman nursed her 42-year-old brother (probable case), who had died with signs and symptoms suggestive of Marburg.

However Mwebesa said since the outbreak, "Epidemiologists have been on ground conducting active case findings and tracing people who have come into contact with confirmed cases across the Sebei sub-region but no new cases have been registered so far."

The team is also engaged in mapping health facilities to determine which staff require training in disease surveillance, including following up and verifying possible case alerts, monitoring the movement of confirmed cases and all places where cases and contacts with cases have been.

Dr Godfrey Chemos, the Kween district health officer, said when the disease first broke out, the community was rowdy but later came to terms with the situation.

He said that 78 out of 217 people who were believed to have come into contact with the confirmed cases have since completed their 21 days of monitoring. Chemos said no more patients have been isolated.

Marburg is a viral disease that spreads through direct contact with wounds and body fluids such as blood, saliva, vomit, stool and urine of a person who is infected. It affects both humans and non-human primates like monkeys and baboons.

Symptoms include high fever, vomiting blood, joint and muscle pains and bleeding through the body openings like eyes, nose, gums, ears, anus and skin.

Marburg, although highly contagious and kills within a short time, is preventable. This is why a burial team comprising health experts was constituted and trained in proper burial practice to ensure the safe burial of any new cases and prevent potential further spread of the disease.

The ministry has also engaged Kenyan authorities to boost cross-border surveillance efforts.

Mwebesa said the multi-disciplinary team of experts will remain on the ground in Kapchorwa, Kween and the neighbouring districts until the outbreak is fully contained.

Excerpt from the World Health