

Suspect. Health officials said samples from the patient had been taken to the Kenya Medical Research Institute for testing.

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KENYA. A patient was on Tuesday put on quarantine in Trans-Nzoia County in western Kenya for suspected Marburg infection.

The man, a Ugandan national, had crossed into Kenya to seek medical attention at Bwayi Village in Kaisagat, Kwanza, when medical personnel there isolated him upon suspecting he might be suffering from Marburg hemorrhagic fever.

Health officials told *Daily Nation* that samples from the patient had been taken to the Kenya Medical Research Institute for testing. The results were expected yesterday.

Mr Gilbert Sowon, the Trans-Nzoia County director of Preventive and Promotive Health Services, said should the tests confirm Marburg infection, the county will be forced to enforce strict surveillance along the border with Uganda, where six cases have been reported in Kapchorwa District.

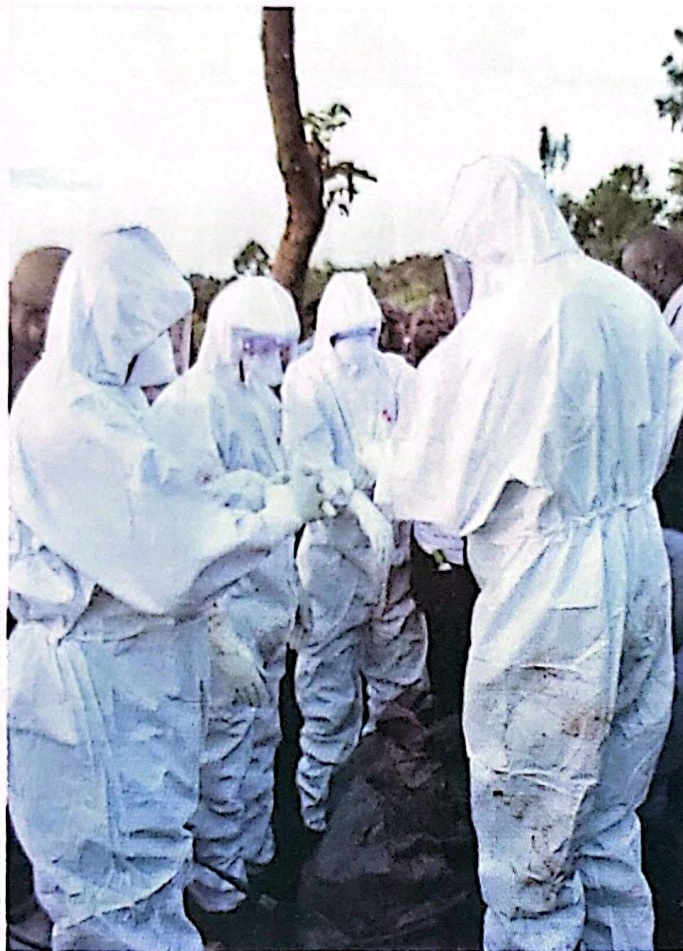
Two people have since died of the disease in Kween District since the infection was reported mid-last month.

The Kitale County Hospital Medical Superintendent, Dr Emmanuel Wanjala, said the patient is suspected to have crossed into Kenya through Suam, one of the many porous crossing points on the Kenya-Uganda border.

"We are now screening those who might have come into contact with the patient," Dr Wanjala said.

Marburg hemorrhagic fever is a severe and highly fatal disease caused by the Marburg virus from the Filoviridae family; the same family as the Ebola virus. The virus is among the most deadly known to infect humans. The incubation period

Kenya detains Ugandan over Marburg infection



Gone. Health experts bury the third Marburg victim in Kamwam Village, Kween District last Thursday. PHOTO BY JOYCE CHEMITAI

is two to 21 days, and symptom onset is sudden and marked by fever, chills, headache, and myalgia.

Although the disease is rare, it can result in large outbreaks with high fatality rates.

The disease is transmitted by direct contact with the blood, body fluids and tissues of infected persons or wild animals, including monkeys and fruit bats.

The World Health Organisation, while confirming the outbreak in eastern Uganda, said it

is aware of at least one fatality but hundreds of people may have been exposed to the virus at health facilities and at traditional burial ceremonies in Kween District, a mountainous area 300 kilometres northeast of Kampala.

The first case was detected by the Ministry of Health on October 17, when a 50-year-old woman died at a health centre of fever, bleeding, vomiting and diarrhoea on October 11.

Laboratory tests at the Uganda Virus Research Institute in

Entebbe confirmed the cause of death as Marburg.

The woman's brother had also died of similar symptoms three weeks earlier and was buried in a traditional ceremony. He worked as a game hunter and lived near a cave inhabited by Rousettus bats, which are natural hosts of the Marburg virus.

"We are working with the health authorities to rapidly implement response measures," said Ibrahim-Soce Fall, the WHO Regional Emergency Director for the Africa region.

"Uganda has previously managed Ebola and Marburg outbreaks but international support is urgently required to scale up the response as the overall risk of national and regional spread of this epidemic-prone disease is high," he added.

PAST OUTBREAKS

2007: Four cases, including two deaths, in Ibanda District, Western Uganda.

2008: Two unrelated cases in travellers returning to the Netherlands and USA, respectively after visiting caves in Western Uganda.

2012: Fifteen cases, including four deaths, in Ibanda and Kabale districts, Western Uganda.

2014: One case of a healthcare professional from Mpigi District, Central Uganda.